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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

TITLE:

PULLING SUCCESS FROM FAILURE: THE TEXAS WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE

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AUTHOR:

**Major Jesse L. Gruter, USMC
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Mentor: Donald F. Bittner, M.A., Ph.D. (History)

Approved: _____

Date: _____

Mentor: Charles L. Hudson, Lieutenant Colonel, USMC, M.A., M.M. S. (Military Studies)

Approved: _____

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THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.**

Title: Pulling Success From Failure: The Texas War For Independence

Author: Jesse L. Gruter, Major, USMC

Thesis: When analyzed in light of current Marine Corps strategy and operational doctrine, the Texas Revolution was not fought pursuant to a formula for success. The primary reason was that when the war began, it was not an instrument of a coherent policy. However, despite this failure, the Texans were still able to win the war because chance played in their favor.

Discussion: The Texans should not have won the Texas Revolution. From the outset, the situation for Texas was bleak. Texas, the Mexican state, went from having a government but no policy, to a government with a policy of loyalty to a nonexistent document, to no government and no policy. While the political situation was fluctuating between these extremes, the Texans were embroiled in combat with the Mexican army without clear strategic guidance as to what their end state should be. Furthermore, not only was there a lack of strategic guidance, but the political leadership had appointed four simultaneous commanders-in-chief of the Texas army, at one time. By March 1836, the political leadership had corrected its errors and provided a clear policy goal, independence. However, this did not end the problems for the military campaign that continued to suffer from the previous errors of the politicians.

Independence required that Santa Anna be removed from power and the former state of Tejas be absorbed into the new republic. Texas, though, did not possess the ability to fight such a war given their enemy was a vast country with substantial resources and population. Neither did the political leadership have the patience to fight a long protracted war of erosion. The military was placed in a no win situation. Only luck could pull them out of the failure that they would surely experience. Luck came to them in the form of Santa Anna.

As the political leader of Mexico, he should not have led an army to fight a band of settlers turned rebels. However, in search of the same glory that had made him a national hero, he personally commanded the Texas campaign. By leading so far from the front, he became the critical vulnerability of his center of gravity, the army. Exposed to the hazards of war, the president of Mexico was captured for his cavalier ways by the Texans. In so doing, the small Texas force brought Mexico to its knees. They had won a war that they should not have been able to.

Conclusion: The value of the Texas Revolution to the military scientist is found in its failures. These failures demonstrate the need for a clearly articulate policy, unified command, and the need for the political leadership to understand the type of war that they are embarking on in the execution of their policy. Texas political leadership failed on all fronts. Despite these failures, the Texans won their independence because the third element of the Clausewitz trinity, chance, fell on the side of the Texans.

MEMORANDUM FOR: Professor Donald F. Bittner, Lieutenant Colonel Charles L. Hudson & COMPASS

Subj: MMS PAPER PROPOSAL

1. Essential information:

- a. Major Jesse L. Gruter, USMC, Conference Group #6
- b. Proposed topic: Pulling Success from Failure: The War for Texas Independence
- c. Master's Paper Committee: Professor Donald F. Bittner and Lieutenant Colonel Charles L. Hudson
- d. Problem Statement: The War for Texas Independence was a relatively short war composed of approximately 24 engagements. I will not discuss each engagement, limiting my focus to three engagements. Two of which, the Alamo and the Goliad Massacre, were fought outside the campaign fought by Sam Houston, but have a direct bearing on his campaign. The third engagement is the only engagement fought by Sam Houston in his campaign for independence, the Battle of San Jacinto. What is unique about this campaign analysis is that it was a single engagement, fought largely under the misguided policy of a new Republic that could not by any stretch of the imagination be successful on an operational level, but was successful on a strategic level simply because of luck. So this study will bleed over from the operational level to the strategic and policy level.
- e. Proposed Research Question: Despite the victory, was this war waged under a formula for success?

2. Research Design

- a. Methodology: I intend to conduct a historical review of the available literature on the revolution – both political and military. This review will be highlighted by the three best-known battles of the war, the battle of the Alamo, the Goliad Massacre and the Battle of San Jacinto. I will also review the literature that questions the ability of Sam Houston to command his troops. While this insightful, it does not answer the question regarding the overall conduct of the war. Subsequently, I will review the Marine Corps' current doctrine of campaigning to evaluate the success and failures of the war.
- b. Preliminary Research: My initial research has centered on accumulating what has been taken to be historical fact e.g. the locations of the battles, the participants, the numbers and the commanders.

(1) Marine Corps doctrine sets the criteria for the conduct of a successful campaign. Leadership is an important part of a successful campaign but is only one part. It is important to examine all aspects. It is fashionable history to say that Sam Houston

was an ineffectual leader and place the success of the Texas war at the feet of his men. This is a mistake. Sam Houston was successful in a number of ways in the conduct of his campaign.

(2) The major impediment Sam Houston's campaign was the government of Texas. Their inability to grasp the situation that faced the state, the needs of the army, and most importantly, provide policy direction until the war was well under way created a climate that was virtually impossible to lead a successful campaign.

(3) Along with the lack of political direction Sam Houston faced a host of other problems, most notably the organization and men of the army. The organization did not lend itself to unity of command and the men were unaccustomed to the discipline of a regular military.

(4) The ability to lead a successful campaign under the circumstance that faced Sam Houston was next to impossible. Though he was successful, had the Texans not captured Santa Anna, they probably would have failed because they did not have the resources to fight a war of annihilation nor a war of erosion. Essentially, their success was limited to the tactical level of war and their luck allowed them to succeed at the strategical level.

c. Sources: The initial sources for reference materials have focused on books and articles available at the Research Center and on inter-library loans from the Naval Academy and Texas A&M University. Additionally, Marine Corps strategy and campaigning doctrine will be reviewed.

d. Milestones

(1) Application	7 September 2001
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(4) First draft	14 January 2002
(5) Second draft	4 March 2002
(6) Final draft	1 April 2002
(7) Signed original/disc/critique/DTIC report	1 May 2002

3. Annotated Bibliography attached

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PREFACE

Most Americans perceive the American Revolution as a point of origin for their identity, not the Texan. Growing up as a product of Texas public schools, the American Revolution was something that was viewed as not “happening” to us. American History does not begin for Texans until Texas joined the Union in 1845. To be sure, many if not most of the heroes of the Texas Revolution had experienced the American fight for freedom in some direct or indirect manner and subsequently migrated to Texas. However, the state that they were forefathers to bred a new spirit apart from the American spirit. As a sixth generation Texan – all of whom lived their entire lives in one county – the subject matter of this analysis identifies that spirit for most if not all Texans, including myself.

In military studies, the Texas Revolution is viewed as inconsequential. I say this from first hand experience, having never heard it mentioned in my professional military career except in passing and more often then not as the brunt of a joke. I fail to understand this. We study at length the military campaigns led by the Virginians, North and South Carolinians, in our examination of the Civil War. We talk about Lee’s great abilities and the fighting spirit of the South when they saw that it was in their interest to separate from the Union. We look to their failure for justification and examples of modern Marine Corps doctrine. The American Civil War was interesting for all its twist and turns and battles, but the Texas Revolution provided the same level of lessons to be learned, and it was a triumph in contrast to the South’s defeat.

What I have done is simply apply tenants of Marine Corps doctrine to the Texas Revolution. As much as it pains me, this application dispelled some of the myths that I

had grown up viewing as truths. Texas did not win their independence as a result of Sam Houston's leadership, or the damage caused to Santa Anna's army as a result of the Alamo defenders. Texans were *lucky* to have succeeded in their endeavor. More importantly than dispelling myths, though, what this analysis accomplishes for those interested in military studies is a clear picture of the importance of some of the Marine Corps' most basic doctrinal principles.

A clear policy setting the strategic direction for a war is necessary in order that the war not deteriorate into chaos. Failure on the part of the political leadership to understand what type of war they are engaged in, and how and what is necessary to fight such a war could lead to disaster. Unity of command and support of that command by the policy makers must be present. If it is not, there could be serious consequences at the operational and tactical level of war. These are some of the principles that were not followed by those leading the fight for Texas independence that ultimately cost the lives of approximately 600 Texans.

What this analysis is not is a complete researched history of the life of Sam Houston. This approach bears mentioning because so much of the successes and failures of the Texas Revolution has been placed upon this one man. My focus was to examine why the war was won, when from a doctrinal framework it resembled a disaster. A study of the life and times of Sam Houston does not provide that answer. In the bibliography accompanying this writing, one will note that there are much more recent works on the man than those cited. John H. Williams, *Sam Houston*, and Randolph B. Campbell, *Sam Houston and the American Southwest*, both published in 1993 are examples of two such recent biographies. These may be of interest to one searching for a historical perspective

on the life of one man, but the war was not won because of his leadership, nor was he the cause of some of its greatest failings.

The search for these objective truths is a frustrating one. What is perceived as true to one is not if ever perceived as true to another. However, by using doctrine and not my opinion to draw the conclusions I have drawn, I hope that the reader will gain both a better understanding of the Texas Revolution, and also the doctrine by which we measure a successful war today. If I have succeeded, I owe it to my mentors, Dr. Donald Bittner and Lieutenant Colonel Charles Hudson. Their patience in dealing with my frustration on this subject, which is not simply a description of a war, but my identity, was admirable. I am also indebted to Dr. John “Blackjack” Matthews who was a “behind the scene” man on this project. I am obligated to mention my family, to include those six generations before me who have made me what I am today, instilling in me a sense of pride in being a Texan that was strong enough to motivate me to write. Most importantly, I am forever grateful to my wife, Brittan, daughter, Victoria and son, Dutch. Their ability to show support and express an interest in this work while dealing with the first day of second grade, black eyes, midnight fevers, dinners and bills have served as a staff throughout.

PROLOGUE: THE TEXAS REVOLUTION AND MODERN MARINE CORPS DOCTRINE

It is better evidence than that of the poets, who exaggerate the importance of their themes, or the prose chroniclers, who are less interested in telling the truth than in catching the attention of their public, whose authorities cannot be checked, and whose subject matter, owing to the passage of time, is mostly lost in the unreliable streams of mythology.¹

Thucydides

For a number of reasons, most military scientists overlook the value of studying the war for Texas independence. It is a relatively small war. It was a war of rebellion in a foreign country. In history, it falls between the War of 1812 and the Mexican-American War. The primary reason the war is overlooked by scholars is the influence of popular culture. Popular culture, at least Texas popular culture, focuses on the war's seemingly mythological status and not its value to military science. Symbolic of this mythological status is the engagement fought at the Alamo. Military lessons become hopelessly lost in stories of bravery instead of the factual aspects of the conflict. The myth is further perpetuated by the success of Sam Houston's army at San Jacinto. This single engagement appears to have achieved victory for the Texans at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of war. This has not occurred often in the history of warfare. The sum of these two engagements is that if the war is studied at all, only Texans study it as an obvious significant point in state history.

My intent is to move away from the mythological into a pragmatic view of the Texas Revolution through the application of doctrine. Specifically, **what I intend to do is determine if the Texas Revolution should have been won when analyzed in light of current Marine Corps strategy and operational doctrine.** Simply put, should this war

¹ Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Rex Warner, (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1972), 47.

have succeeded? Before ascertaining the answer to this question, we must first determine what is formula for engaging in a successful war when scrutinized with regards to modern warfighting doctrine.

There are as many different formulas as there are military theorists. However one theorist does merit special attention because of his influence on Marine Corps doctrine, Carl von Clausewitz. Capsulation of Clausewitz is virtual impossible, but there is a reoccurring theme in his writing that can be succinctly stated which is significant to the question that I have posed. This theme is better known as the Clausewitz trinity. Clausewitz states,

War [is]... composed of primordial violence, hatred, and enmity, which are to be regarded as blind natural forces; of the play of chance and probability within which the creative spirit is free to roam; and of [war's] element of subordination, as an instrument of policy, which makes it subject to reason alone.²

The first obvious element of the trinity is that war is violent, and by its nature, *chaotic*. Chaos gives rise to *chance* occurrences and uncertainty where the character of those involved plays a significant role in the outcome of events. The third principle of the trinity, *war is an instrument of policy*, is the key to a successful formula for waging war. War is subservient to policy. This basic principle should not be switched so that war is the driving force of policy. When the war-policy relationship is reversed, the chaotic nature of war begins to shape policy, which can lead to disaster. Though the reversal of this relationship will not with absolute certainty lead to a loss on the battlefield, it will increase the chances of catastrophe as policy remains one step behind events on the battlefield. The Texas Revolution will demonstrate this hypothesis.

²Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War* trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret, Indexed ed., (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), 89. Cited hereafter as Clausewitz.

Understanding that policy occupies the top wrung in the hierarchy of components of warfare provides a line of departure for the theoretical framework used for a formula of conducting a successful war. The principle of supremacy of policy is the foundation that Marine Corps doctrine begins with.³ Policy sets the *political objectives* of a nation. These political objectives set the *national strategy*. Military, economic, informational, and diplomatic strategies are “supporting strategies that contribute to attaining the objective of national strategy.”⁴

Political objectives when applied by one nation upon another can be either *limited* or *unlimited*.

When a political entity seeks an *unlimited* political objective, its enemy’s leadership is to be removed (perhaps merely deposed, perhaps exiled, imprisoned, or executed), while the enemy’s former assets (territory, population, economic resources) may be absorbed, redistributed, or eradicated.... Conversely, a *limited* objective includes anything short of eliminating the political opponent. It is envisioned that the enemy leadership will remain in control after the conclusion of hostilities, although some aspect of its power (influence, territory, resources, or internal control) will be reduced or curtailed (emphasis added).⁵

The nature of the political objective will affect the character of the war to be waged. If it is conducted for unlimited political objectives, the military strategy will be unlimited. If the political objectives are limited, then the military strategy may be either limited *or* unlimited in nature. Fighting a war of unlimited military objectives requires a military strategy of *annihilation*. However, when fighting a war of limited objectives, a military strategy of annihilation or *erosion* may be employed. A strategy of annihilation focuses operational efforts on the “enemy’s armed forces and the object is to render them

³ U.S. Marine Corps Publication MCDP 1-1, *Strategy*, (November 1997), 12. Cited hereafter as *Strategy*.

⁴ *Strategy*, 41.

powerless. Those forces may be annihilated through battle or through destruction of the social or industrial infrastructure that supports them.... Victory is easily measured: when one side's fighting forces are no longer able to present organized resistance, the other side has won.”⁶

A war of erosion is not so simple. The enemy's military may not be the focus of effort. The other supporting strategies may play a significant role in bringing about the desired end state. It is not the object of such a war to destroy the enemy. The object is to bring the enemy to a point where his objectives are no longer worth the continuation of the war effort from his perspective. It does not mean that the enemy has been brought to his knees such that he cannot continue.⁷

In conclusion, the conceptual relationship of the elements of a formula for success on the battlefield can be summarized in the following. Policy must drive the political objective. The political objective should set the national strategy. The national strategy in turn should set the military strategy. The military strategy should support the political objectives through a strategy of either erosion or annihilation depending on the nature of those political objectives. Finally, the objectives of the military strategy will depend on whether it is a war of erosion or annihilation. The translation of strategy into military objectives and the execution of the plans to achieve the objective is the *operational level of war*. Without accounting for all the social, economical, political, or military variables that are present in every war, if a nation begins within this framework then the chances of success are greater than if the formula is reversed.

⁵ *Strategy*, 44-46.

⁶ *Strategy*, 57-58.

⁷ *Strategy*, 57-58.

This construct for a successful war raises some basic questions that need to be addressed in order to determine whether or not the Texas Revolution was a war that should have been won. What were the political objectives of the Texas Government? Was there a clearly defined strategy for the war that took into account the political objectives? What was the military strategy? Did this strategy support the political objectives? Was the outcome a result of successful implementation of the military strategy or was it due to other factors? The answer to these questions will effectively measure the level of success of the Texas Revolution when interlocked with modern doctrine.

Why should we bother with trying to determine the probability of success of a war that we know succeeded? The reason is that the war's success has never been placed in a doctrinal framework. It is discussed only historically. What I have found to be a common problem of these historical analyses of the Texas Revolution is, though the factual rendering of the war is accurate, the analysis of historians lacks any doctrinal framework. Historians will shy away from such terms as *unlimited* and *limited political objectives*, or *centers of gravity* and *critical vulnerabilities*. Most importantly, historians of this war fail to articulate in doctrinal terms the impact that the failures of the political leadership had upon its conduct. Usually once the facts have been established, historians of this conflict evaluate the success or failure of the confrontation effort based upon the *character* of the political and military leadership or lack thereof; usually their focus centers upon Sam Houston as the key figure. The fault in this approach is that ultimately the conclusion rests on the opinion of the historian with regard to a single individual and not on any doctrine or theory of warfare. What I hope to do is provide an assessment

based on doctrine, separate from any personal opinions that I may have of Sam Houston or any other leader of the new republic.

In the end, many of my conclusions regarding the political situation, Sam Houston, the Texas army, and Santa Anna may not differ from those drawn by many historians. What will be different is that these conclusions will be drawn in accordance with modern doctrine. Based upon this doctrine, there will be one primary reason for why the Texans managed to succeed where failure seemed almost certain. In the Clausewitzian view of warfare, the third point to the trinity will provide the key. *Chance* played to the Texans' favor. It was neither the bravery of the Texans, nor the superiority of the Texas army in comparison to its enemy that allowed them to succeed. Their success certainly was not due to strong political leadership. In the end, the Texans can attribute their, or I should "our," vaunted history as the Lone Star State on one primary reason: we were lucky.

CHAPTER 1

The Political Context: The Constitution of 1824 or Independence?

*If it is all a calculation of probabilities based on
given individuals and conditions, the political object,
which was the original motive, must become an
essential factor in the equation⁸*

Carl von Clausewitz

Because the formula to fight a successful war begins with the principle that war is an instrument of policy, the point of departure for determining whether or not the Texas Revolution was a war that should have succeeded is at the policy level. Establishing policy then setting national and military strategies is not always, if ever, as simple as asking the political leadership what the policy is then shaping those strategies and objectives accordingly. This difficulty can be caused by any number of factors, but what is clear in the study of the Texas Revolution is that the first stepping stone for a formula for success, a clearly defined policy, was at first missing. Subsequently it was also ill defined during the first crucial phases of the war.

However, blame for this miscue cannot be placed solely upon the political leadership of the Republic, though they shoulder most of the burden. The politicians were not operating in the most stable of environments. Texas, the future republic, was not independently established from Mexico when the policy was being formulated. This process of developing policy was not a process undertaken by an existing nation, but was a process undertaken by a people taking the initial steps toward self-governing, all the while being controlled by military actions in the field. This is the reverse of the key element of the Clausewitzian trinity that war is an instrument of policy.

⁸ Clausewitz, 80,81

I. SANTA ANNA AND THE HISTORY BEHIND THE POLICY

Numerous circumstances lead to the inversion of the principle that “war is an instrument of policy”, but contrary to popular myth General Antonio de Santa Anna’s rise to the presidency of Mexico alone did not result in this reversal through the immediate ignition of an uprising in Texas.⁹ To understand Santa Anna’s role in this turnabout of the Clausewitz principle, a brief history of Mexico’s relationship with Spain, the colonization of Texas, and the deterioration of the Mexico-Texas relationship is necessary.

Initially, Moses Austin, a native of Connecticut, received a land grant from Spanish ruled Mexico in 1820 permitting him to colonize what was then Spanish Texas with 300 families from the United States. Before he could exercise his rights under the grant, he died. These rights then fell to his son, Stephen F. Austin, but he experienced difficulties exercising these rights.¹⁰ In 1821, Mexico declared its independence from Spain, and it was not until 1823 that S. F. Austin was able to garner support from the now independent Mexican government to begin settling in Texas. With the recognition by free Mexico of the grant given to Moses Austin by Spanish Mexico, colonization began to increase. Then much to the approval of the former U.S. citizens, Mexico passed the 1824 Constitution, a document modeled after the U.S. Constitution.¹¹

During the period from 1821 to 1830, Santa Anna’s military and political career began to take shape. He had initially accepted a commission in the Spanish Army in 1810. When the Mexican Revolution against Spanish rule occurred, Santa Anna, always

⁹ Paul D. Lack, *The Texas Revolutionary Experience*, (College Station, Texas; Texas A&M University Press, 1992), 18. Cited hereafter as Lack.

¹⁰ Stephen L. Hardin, *The Alamo 1836; Santa Anna’s Campaign*, (London; Osprey Publishing, 2001), 7. Cited hereafter as Hardin, *The Alamo*.

the opportunist, realigned his loyalties with the revolutionary banner. The man who Santa Anna helped bring to power once Spain had been ousted in 1822 was Agustin de Iturbide. Iturbide, instead of delivering on the promise of a new regime free from crown rule, declared himself Emperor of Mexico.¹²

Sensing that the emperor's rule was neither popular with his fellow countrymen nor an approach that would bring him the power he desired, Santa Anna led a coup against Iturbide in March 1823. His actions then made him a popular hero. Subsequently in 1829, his reputation as a fighter for Mexico's freedom grew when Spain attempted to reestablish its rule. Santa Anna led the charge that eventually ended in a second successful expulsion of Spain. Once again Santa Anna was viewed as the champion of Mexican nationalism. Running for president on a federalist ticket, he was elected president of Mexico in 1833.¹³

So, initially, Santa Anna's rise to power did little to stir the emotions of independence in Texas. It is conceivable that Santa Anna's popularity with the Texans may have grown. Had Spain succeeded in its attempted reassertion of sovereignty over Mexico, the Texans may have had to abandon their grants made by free Mexico between 1823 and 1829. However, from the point of his election, Santa Anna's reputation would change. His downfall in popularity with the Texans, and indeed all of Mexico, was due to a fundamental shift in his method of rule.

Santa Anna abolished the 1824 Constitution in 1834. He felt that the country was not ready for democratic rule. This was probably due more to his ambitions to be the supreme leader of Mexico than any real need to shift the foundation of government. As

¹¹ Hardin, *The Alamo*, 7

¹² Hardin, *The Alamo*, 10.

with most dictators, he harnessed support for his position by force. In order to secure his authority as dictator of Mexico, Santa Anna dissolved state legislatures and made the former states military departments. This action, not his election to office, provided the impetus for unrest in Texas. Dissolving democratic rule also caused his government to split into two factions: the *federalist*, those who supported the 1824 Constitution, and the *centralist*, those loyal to Santa Anna. This division in the Mexican government created the environment for the Texas breakaway.¹⁴

Prior to the revolt in Texas, however, Santa Anna had to deal with the Mexican state of Zacatecas. It is important to mention Santa Anna's treatment of the Zacatecas revolt because it served as warning for the Texans as to how Santa Anna would react to opposition to his rule. In Zacatecas, the federalist had taken over the state government. On the morning of May 11, 1835, Santa Anna moved his forces to encircle the federalist led Zacatecas militia while they slept. He then launched a surprise attack. After two hours of fighting, the Zacatecans broke and ran. When the engagement was over, the Mexicans counted approximately 1,200 dead Zacatecans and 2,723 prisoners. Santa Anna then allowed his military two days to plunder the city.¹⁵

After putting down the Zacatecan uprising, Santa Anna turned his attentions to Coahuila y Tejas. Coahuila was where Texas was represented in the Mexican government. Embroiled in the federalist versus centralist struggle, Coahuila had formed

¹³ Hardin, *The Alamo*, 10-11.

¹⁴ Hardin, *The Alamo*, 7-10.

¹⁵ Randy Roberts and James S. Olson, *A Line in the Sand*, (New York, NY: The Free Press, 2001), 5-27. Cited hereafter as Roberts and Olson.

two state governments. Agustin Viesca led the federalist government. Santa Anna's brother-in-law, General Martin Perfecto de Cos, led the centralist government.¹⁶

The Texans supported the Viesca government. Historians point out that attendance at the Viesca government by the Texas delegates was probably due more to promotion of self-interest than a sense of loyalty to federalism or Texas independence. The primary reason for this conclusion is that from the Viesca federalist assembly came the measure that land grants were to be given to those individuals who could raise an army to fight the centralist government of Santa Anna. This incentive to revolt certainly seemed to work to the advantage of the wealthy. Thus, in 1834-35 Texas, a unified front *against* Santa Anna's dictatorship and leadership *for* a Texas cause appeared to be nonexistent.¹⁷

II. THE BEGINNINGS OF GOVERNMENT AND FORMULATION OF POLICY

By the time the Texans took matters into their own hands and established a provisional state government, the town militias had already fought a series of successful engagements with the Mexicans that occupied Texas prior to Santa Anna mounting a major campaign.¹⁸ Generally, the war's beginning is traced to an incident that occurred on October 2, 1835 in Gonzales, Texas. A cannon had been given to the Gonzales settlers by the Mexican government when the relationship between the central and state governments was not strained. The central government ordered the Gonzales residents to

¹⁶ Lack, 18. This was the same Cos who would later surrender San Antonio de Bexar to the Texans and would return with Santa Anna to Bexar to lay siege to the Alamo.

¹⁷ Lack, 18

¹⁸ These militias were not "militia" in the strictest sense of the word. They had never trained or drilled together before the war. However, as the war progressed, these men became more than simply locally raised defenders. They lost their lives far from home at the Alamo, Goliad, and San Jacinto. To call them

return it as the possibility of war loomed on the horizon. The Texans refused to relinquish their artillery piece. They viewed it as a necessity for their protection against Indian raids and in any future war with Mexico. So, the Mexicans sought the return of this field piece through forcible means. The Texans won this first clash with the Mexicans, and they continued to win.¹⁹

After Gonzales, the Texans defeated the Mexicans at Concepcion and then laid siege to San Antonio de Bexar (now known as San Antonio) where the last remnants of the Mexican army remained.²⁰ All the while that these engagements were taking place, there was no governing body rallying Texan support. Because of the earlier military victories, the Texas settlers lacked a sense of urgency to organize and draft the necessary charter to establish a new state government within Mexico, or to create an independent sovereignty. It was not until late October 1835 that the local municipalities met and decided there needed to be some centralized control over the issues now being determined by armed conflict. The municipalities then formed an interim government under the name of the “Permanent Council”.²¹

The Permanent Council provided little direction to Texas and its evolving military force through the formulation of policy. In fact because of its incompetence, the Council succeeded in driving popular support away from the government and the “army” in the field. Since it was reluctant to take any substantive measures for provisioning the militia, the Council authorized these “military” units to impress arms and other supplies from the

“locally raised forces” for the duration of the war would be incorrect. For lack of a better term for this conglomeration of armed citizenry, “militia” is the term that best describes them.

¹⁹ Hardin, *The Alamo*, 7-8.

²⁰ For a detailed discussion on the Texas victory at Bexar which resulted in the remainder of the Mexican army being expelled from the state, see Stephen L. Hardin, *Texian Iliad*, (Austin, TX; University of Texas Press, 1994), 53-96. Cited hereafter as Hardin, *Iliad*.

²¹ Lack, 41

resident population. This was unpopular with the colonists having to put up with the ill-discipline units operating in their area. In another step distancing popular support for the developing war, the Council closed the land offices, thereby ceasing land sales. Those in service had pushed to end land sales while they were at war due to the fear of losing the opportunity to buy quality acreage. Ceasing land sales, the unruliness of the militia, and the demands made upon the civilian population to contribute to the war effort, left the public almost as disenchanted with the Council and the Texas military as they were with Santa Anna's centralist regime. The only positive action from the Council was the determination that another government should be formed to take its place in order to carry on the business of the state.²²

III. THE CONSULTATION TAKES CHARGE

The follow on government to the Council was the "Consultation". It first convened on November 3, 1835, and did little to solidify policy and public support. Representatives to the Consultation were elected by general election, and most of those elected were men who had served in public office in some capacity prior to their election. They came to the table with two distinct ideas: independence from Mexico or submission to the 1824 Constitution. Initially, the Consultation formed a special committee to assess the issue of independence, but it was unable to decide which policy to accept. So, the general body took the issue.²³

The general body voted to remain loyal to the 1824 Constitution, a document nullified by Santa Anna. Historians speculate that the Consultation may have hoped that this decision would cause other states within Mexico to raise up in general revolt against

²² Lack, 42-43

²³ For a detailed discussion of who was elected and the views that they held, see Lack, 46-48

Santa Anna. However, the lesson learned by the Mexican populace from the Zacatecan uprising probably did enough to deter any general support for the Texans.²⁴ Regardless of the proposed intent, the outcome was a confused policy of loyalty to a nonexistent document.

With a “policy” now established, the Consultation proceeded with other business. The Consultation turned its efforts to the creation of an army, which everyone knew would be needed because it was only a matter of time before Santa Anna crossed the Rio Grande to quash the discontent in Texas. On paper, the Consultation appeared to create an adequate force totaling 1,120 troops. Within this number were regulars and volunteers. There would be two regiments, one infantry and the other artillery. In addition to their pay, which would be the same as their U.S. army counterparts, the Texas soldier would receive 640 acres of land.²⁵ Additionally, “with one dissenting vote Sam Houston was elected commander-in-chief of the Armies.”²⁶

Though nicely completed on paper, the Consultation handled the actual creation of the army in the same confused manner as they had handled the policy question. The most damaging decision made was placing the militia outside of the authority of the regular army.²⁷ In so doing, a “regular” army would have to be created from scratch.²⁸ The new government lacked organization, funds, and means to fulfill such a requirement. Furthermore, this split in authority impacted the operational control and employment of

²⁴ Lack, 49

²⁵ Hardin, *The Iliad*, 57-59

²⁶ Marquis James, *The Raven, A Biography of Sam Houston*, (Indianapolis, ID: The Bobbs-Merrill Company 1929), 215. Cited hereafter as James.

²⁷ John H. Jenkins, Journals of the Consultation, November 21, 1835, *Papers of the Texas Revolution, 1835-1836*, 9:274-75 (Austin Tex: Presidial Press, 1973), quoted in Lack, 117.

²⁸ The reasoning behind this step is unknown, but it is possible that the government knew that if the volunteers of the militia, who loathed the ideal of the regular army, were made part of the such a force they would have simply left the service leaving Texas defenseless.

the military later in the war. However, the Consultation did little more to build the support structure necessary for the force created on paper.

With the business of the army now addressed, the Consultation moved on to the creation of a government. Henry Smith was chosen as the first governor, and with this position he was also the head of the military. Smith was decidedly pro-independence. The Consultation then formed the General Council. One of the strong voices of the General Council was Don Carlos Barrett, a supporter of continued loyalty to the 1824 Constitution.²⁹

This division in ideals at the zenith of political leadership created a quagmire in Texas government. The effects of this division climaxed on January 9, 1836. Governor Smith could no longer square his pro-independence views with the Council's continued pro-1824 Constitution position. They became embroiled in heated disagreement and were literally reduced to name-calling. Smith unilaterally dissolved the Council. The Council then impeached Smith. However, neither branch had the authority to take such action.³⁰ Texas now had no government to resolve the policy conflict. Without a policy, there could be no national strategy. Without a national strategy, there was no way of setting military strategy and defining objectives to that end. At a point in time when the leadership should rally their countrymen, Texans could only watch in bewilderment as they were thrown headfirst into a revolution caused by the militia's engagements with the Mexican army, and anarchy in the government created by the policy makers.

Against a backdrop of such a monstrous failure on the part of the policy makers, it is impossible to say that the Texas Revolution was being conducted pursuant to any

²⁹ Lack, 51

conceptual formula for success. Nevertheless, Sam Houston, the commander-in-chief of the Texas Army, appointed by a now dissolved authority, and lacking any strategic guidance, was to wage a war against Mexico with an army composed primarily of men not required to follow his authority! Before examining Houston's military campaign and attempting to determine why the war was successful despite these shortcomings, an assessment of his enemy as well as his own forces is appropriate.³¹

³⁰ Hardin, *The Iliad*, 109. For a detailed discussion of the events leading to the dissolution of the Council and impeachment of the governor see Lack, 53-60.

³¹ Joe Strange, Ph.D., *Capital "W" War: A Case for Strategic Principles of War*, vol. 6 of *Perspectives On Warfighting*, (VA: Marine Corps University, 1998), 7-10.

CHAPTER 2

The Combatants: The Mexican and Texan Army

*Therefore I say: Know the enemy and know yourself;
in a hundred battles you will never be in peril.*³²

Sun Tzu

*A revolutionary army must have discipline that is established on a
limited democratic basis.*³³

Mao Tse-tung

In theory, to be successful on the battlefield, war should be an instrument of the policies of government. However, even if a war is an instrument of policy, this does not guarantee success. Conflicts are not fought in the ether of the theoretical; rather they are fought on the land, air and sea by at least two colliding forces composed of independent wills with different perspectives, characters, states of affairs, and general circumstances.³⁴ This collision of forces and the various factors, limitations, and capabilities of the warring governments must be taken into account when analyzing the outcome a particular hostility.

In examining the factors of the Texas Revolution that influenced the forces and outcome of the war, the Texas *and* Mexican armies both experienced their share of difficulties. Unlike the Texas military situation, though, there was little doubt as to who set the political and strategic goals of the Mexican army and what those objectives were. Santa Anna was in charge, and he aimed to rid Texas of revolutionaries. However, this did not relieve the Mexican army from poor leadership, manpower and logistical difficulties, and the unusually harsh Texas winter of 1836.

³² Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1963) 84.

³³ U.S. Marine Corps Publication FMFRP 12-18, *Mao Tse-tung on Guerrilla Warfare* (April 1989), 90.

³⁴ Clausewitz, 80.

I. THE MEXICAN FORCES

The Texans would collide with the will of Santa Anna in early 1836. If the Mexican army's quality during the Texas campaign had matched Santa Anna's demonstrated hatred for rebellion, the obstacle that lay ahead for Texas independence might have proven insurmountable. However, his army's quality fell short of its leader's anger.

A reason for one of the major deficiencies in Santa Anna's army lay within the history of the nation. Between 1820 and its march into Texas, Mexico experienced numerous civil wars in addition to the wars to free itself from Spanish rule. These conflicts had decimated the army's ranks. By 1836, it was filled by conscripts, convicts, and the indigenous Indian population. Veterans still remained, but they had fought wars close to home, not ones on unfamiliar ground, such as in Texas against an unfamiliar people such as the Texans. Lieutenant Colonel Jose Enrique de la Pena, an officer in Santa Anna's army during his campaign into Texas, remarked that it was "only a nominal army."³⁵

However, Santa Anna did go to great lengths to organize a force that he thought would be adequate to quash the Texas rebellion. The army that assembled for the campaign was divided into two divisions. General Ramirez y Sesma commanded the first division totaling approximately 1,500 men. It was massed in San Luis Potosi, Mexico. After the first division was collected, Santa Anna ordered it to relieve General Martin Perfecto de Cos' forces still under siege at Bexar by the Texas rebels. Sesma departed from San Luis on November 17, 1835. The general was slow to relieve Cos, and before

Sesma could reach Bexar, Cos capitulated. Once the Texans had secured the surrender of Cos, he and his men were released. Cos then marched his forces to Laredo, where he met Sesma in route to Texas. There they remained until Sesma was ordered to march to the Rio Grande and Cos was ordered to Monclova on January 3, 1836.³⁶

General Antonio Gaona commanded the second division. Gaona's command consisted of two infantry and one cavalry brigade. Gaona was ordered to gather his force at Leona Vicario where Santa Anna would subsequently join him.³⁷ Santa Anna would join Gaona to personally lead the army to victory. In addition to the two divisions, General Jose Urrea commanded a third and smaller force of approximately 500 men that included roughly 200 cavalymen.³⁸

Santa Anna's Texas campaign plan was relatively simple. He wanted to move his main body, the second division, to Monclova to be reinforced by General Cos. From Monclova, they would march north-northwest and link-up with General Sesma at the Frio River (a northwest fork of the Nueces River). They would continue to march north-northwest to Bexar, attacking the Texans at the Alamo, and subsequently continue to move east. General Urrea would move north along the coastline clearing it of any rebels that might be operating in the area. The two units would converge in the heart of the Texas settlements, in the area of San Felipe de Austin (now San Felipe) and Harrisburg

³⁵ Jose Enrique de la Pena, *With Santa Ana in Texas, A Personal Narrative of the Revolution*, trans. by Carmen Perry, Expanded ed. (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1975), 8. Cited hereafter as de la Pena.

³⁶ de la Pena, 13-15.

³⁷ Reading a modern map of Mexico, the town of Leona Vicario is on the eastern tip of the Yucatan Peninsula approximately thirteen hundred miles from Monclova. It is unrealistic to expect a 19th century army to have made that trek. Either there was another town of Leona Vicario that was closer to Monclova in 1830 Mexico, or there was a misprint in the translation of de la Pena as to the location of the assembly area, or de la Pena was mistaken.

³⁸ de la Pena, 20.

(now Houston), quashing the rebels and terrifying their supporting population base³⁹ (See figure 20a.⁴⁰).

This was a sound plan. In modern doctrine terminology, Santa Anna saw the Texas militia as the *center of gravity* for the continuation of the rebellion. The *critical vulnerability* of this army was the foundation from which it had arisen, the local populace. If Santa Anna could terrorize the local population, he could effectively cause the dissolution of the rebellion. The army would dissolve because the individual soldier would be forced home to protect his family.⁴¹

However, as Clausewitz wrote, “Everything in strategy is very simple, but that does not mean that everything is very easy.”⁴² Nothing could be truer of Santa Anna’s campaign. Once the army had reached its line of departure at Monclova, ahead it faced a trek through a “desert of one hundred leagues in order to reach Bejar (Bexar) where it could depend on no more provisions than those it carried and often had no water to quench its thirst.”⁴³ Complicating the logistical support of a such large army marching through an inhospitable land was that a number equaling:

At least three fifths or one half the number of ... soldiers were squadrons composed of women, muledrives [sic], wagon-train drivers, boys, and sutlers [sic]; a family much like locust that destroy everything in their path, these

³⁹Hardin, *The Iliad*, 11-24.

⁴⁰ All maps were created using Rand McNally’s CD-ROM, *World Atlas New Millennium World Atlas Deluxe*, 1998. Skokie, IL. They cannot be saved to file. Also, the measure of distances on these maps does not reflect the actual route of the armies; rather they are a close approximation based on viewing several maps from the various histories listed in the bibliography.

⁴¹ Perhaps this is attributing too much military genius to Santa Anna, and he simply saw the mission at hand as killing the rebels. Bexar, where his brother-in-law had been humiliated, certainly provided a tempting target of revenge. One thing was clear regardless of Santa Anna’s motivation especially after his attack on Zacatecas, he would not tolerate rebellion under his rule. For further discussion of Santa Anna’s possible motivation to attack, see Roberts and Olson.

⁴²Clausewitz, 178.

⁴³de la Pena, 24.

people perpetrated excess difficult to remedy, and naturally all hatred fell on the army and those who commanded it.⁴⁴

To add to this difficult situation, once the army entered south Texas, it began to snow.⁴⁵ This was particularly harsh on the conscripted Indian soldiers native to central Mexico, who had probably never seen snow.⁴⁶

Despite these difficulties and losses, to say that the army was ineffectual would be a mistake. The same officer who called the army “nominal”, Jose de la Pena, wrote that the remaining 6,000 men were still “sufficient to overcome an enemy that did not reach even half this number, an enemy inexperienced and untried in the science of war.”⁴⁷ Furthermore, their leader, Santa Anna, was ruthless, and this “sufficient” army was a dangerous tool in his hands. One merely has to recall the destruction he wrought upon the Zacatecan militiamen less than one year prior to his Texas Campaign to understand the lethality that this “sufficient” force could unleash on an “enemy inexperienced and untried in the science of war.” This same army would ultimately annihilate all the 180 defenders of the Alamo and the 400 defenders of Goliad.

However, while Santa Anna may have expected the army to perform as it did during the Zacatecan rebellion, the situation the Mexicans now confronted was far more different and much more dangerous. Santa Anna’s failure to recognize this dissimilarity would ultimately lead to disaster. The physical strain of the march, followed by the

⁴⁴de la Pena, 22.

⁴⁵ According to the National Weather Service, the total snowfall in Del Rio, Texas, which is approximately 50 to 100 miles north of where Santa Anna would have crossed the Rio Grande and 145 miles west of San Antonio, there has been 60.2 inches of total snowfall between Jan 1915 and October 1993. URL: <http://www.srh.noaa.gov/ewx> accessed 22 September 2001. de la Pena described the snow covered desert as “a bewitching scene! As far as one could see, all was snow. The trees, totally covered, formed amazing variety of cones and pyramids, which seemed to be made of alabaster. The Tampico Regiment had left its cavalry saddled, and the mounts, covered to the haunches, could not be distinguished by their color.” de la Pena, 27.

⁴⁶de la Pena, 26-28.

bloody siege of the Alamo, and the chase of the enemy another 150 miles east across flooded rivers would ultimately prove to be too much to ask of his men.

The crowning statement to Santa Anna's indifference to his army's plight came at the Alamo from the Generalissimo's own mouth. Santa Anna threw his best men at a fortified position that was "unimportant either militarily or politically whereas its acquisition was both costly and very bitter in the end."⁴⁸ In the aftermath of the bloody siege when both friend and foe lay about bloodied and dying from Santa Anna's *conscious* decision to not bring doctors along on the campaign, he remarked, "these are the *chickens*. Much blood has been shed; but the battle is over. It was a small affair (emphasis added)."⁴⁹ This same bloodthirsty attitude and total disregard for his men would ultimately drive Santa Anna and his weary army to the disaster at San Jacinto.

I. THE TEXAS FORCES

Though the Mexican army would be the ideal enemy for a powerful and competent military even when lacking strategic guidance, this provides little insight as to how the Texans manage to win the war. The reason for this is that the Texas army was neither powerful nor competent. For all the faults of the Mexican army, the Texas army was no better but for different reasons. The effects of the Consultation's misguided steps in its creation ensured it fell well short of any definition of even an adequate military machine, much less a strong one.

The failure of the Consultation to require the militia to fall under the orders of the regular army not only made the formation of an army a ground-up operation, but also

⁴⁷ de la Pena, 20-21.

⁴⁸ de la Pena, 43.

⁴⁹ Carlos Sanchez-Navarro, *La Guerra de Tejas: Memorias de un Soldado*, (Mexico: Publisher unknown, 1960), 85. Quoted in Hardin, *The Iliad*, 155.

gave rise to discipline problems. Additionally, the Consultation created an even greater division in the ranks by failing to support Sam Houston, the man whom they had appointed to be commander-in-chief. The bonds of the militiamen were not to a leader designated by a central government, but to the men with whom they fought beside, and they had fought a number of engagements prior to Sam Houston's appointment..⁵⁰ Weak support from the Consultation for Houston did little to aid him when attempting to exercise authority over all the forces. The third problem was the continued lack of a clear policy from the Consultation. The events surrounding the fate of the Alamo, the site traditionally aggrandized as the "Shrine of Texas Liberty", serves as the best example of the ripple effect that these hindrances had to the construction of a strong military.⁵¹

Prior to this famous battle, there was the battle for Bexar. Ultimately, the Texans drove out the force under General Cos and won control of the city during the Battle for Bexar.⁵² During this engagement, Colonel Francis Johnson and Colonel James Grant came to know one another. As early as November 29, 1835, Grant had been calling for volunteers to follow him on the offensive into Matamoras, Mexico. He managed to

⁵⁰ Their loyalty was to the unit with whom they fought and the men that they *elected* to be their leaders. An example of this was the men who came together to fight General Cos when he was sent to dispatch the rebels who had refused to surrender their cannon at Gonzales. The Texans swore allegiance to the 1824 Constitution – perhaps a reflection of the common Texans' view of the war - in a document entitled "Compact of Volunteers under Collinsworth." Collinsworth was Mississippian George Morse Collinsworth. They had *elected* him their captain. This was where the election of military leaders first came into practice in the Texas army. Hardin, *The Iliad*, 14-15.

⁵¹ This phrase is engraved on a desk size cardholder and paperweight sculpture of the Alamo that was purchased from a souvenir shop at the Alamo several years ago by the author.

⁵² During the siege of Bexar from October 21 – December 9, 1835 the Texans' numbers ranged from 450 to 600 to 800, then back down to 700. When the force actually engaged the Mexicans it was reduced to approximately 400. Lack, 113. This was another weakness of the Texas militia. The men seemed to serve for as long as they had something to do. It was, therefore, difficult to maintain numerical superiority. This remained a problem throughout the war. Benjamin F. Smith, who had held command in the Texas army wrote to Austin regarding commanding the Texas volunteer force, "... if you are compelled to stay long at a place; [sic] rely upon it, your men will desert you – There is nothing but their honor to govern them – this is in many cases but a cobweb." Benjamin F. Smith to Stephen F. Austin, October 13, 14, 1835, John H. Jenkins, *Papers of the Texas Revolution, 1835-1836* (Austin Tex: Presidial Press, 1973), quoted in Lack, 116.

convince Johnson of the spoils of such an expedition.⁵³ Inspired by the militia's victories or better stated duped by it, the Council decided to authorize Grant's request. However, General Houston and Governor Smith were against such an expedition. Instead, they saw the immediate mission as the *defense* of Texas against the force they knew Santa Anna would send.⁵⁴ Regardless, Governor Smith submitted to the pressure from the Council and authorized this expedition into Matamoras under command of General Houston in late December 1835.⁵⁵

Houston's plan was to head a force that Colonel James Bowie⁵⁶ and Colonel James Fannin were to organize around Goliad and Refugio. Houston was aware that Johnson and Grant were raising a raucous call for a Matamoras expedition. However, he assumed that he would move quick enough to lure any man interested in such an expedition away from them. Houston recognized the complexity of his situation; unless he showed the promise of a greater glory, the army, then primarily composed of veterans from Bexar, would continue to follow those that had lead them to victory, James and Grant.⁵⁷ The repercussion of the Consultation not requiring these militiamen to follow Houston's authority was now apparent.

However, Houston's planning was not enough to quiet the cry for an immediate offensive into Matamoras. Though the expedition was given to Houston, Grant continued lobbying the Council. Historians doubt the sincerity of Grant's call for a Matamoras

⁵³ Hardin, *The Iliad*, 67, 78.

⁵⁴ James, 219.

⁵⁵ Hardin, *The Iliad*, 106.

⁵⁶ Jim Bowie and his knife gained their reputation in a duel. Bowie was an observer of a duel at a sandbar near the Mississippi River at Natchez. The participants missed each other and an argument ensued. Bowie's nemesis, Sheriff Norris Wright, also in attendance, took the opportunity to put a bullet through Bowie's chest. Bowie went after Wright but was shot in the leg and stabbed seven times by two of Wright's friends, but Bowie got up and continued his pursuit of Wright. When Bowie caught Wright, Bowie stabbed him in the chest and killed him. Roberts and Olson, 110.

expedition, but whatever the motives he along with Johnson convinced the Council to take immediate action.⁵⁸ Despite authorizing Houston to lead the Matamoras expedition, the Council also authorized Johnson and Grant to launch their Matamoras expedition! This undermined Houston's authority as both Commander-in-Chief and also operational commander of the Matamoras offensive. However, Houston knew nothing of this until January 6, 1836 when Governor Smith received a letter from Lieutenant Colonel J.C. Neill detailing the Alamo garrison's situation.⁵⁹

Neill recounted in his letter to Smith that he, not Johnson or Grant, was now in command of a skeleton force at Bexar facing the oncoming winter, and had been stripped of most of its supplies by a Matamoras expedition led Johnson and Grant! The reaction by Smith and Houston was to have the latter proceed immediately to Goliad, overtake Grant, and take charge of the expedition. Houston also expected to be greeted by Fannin and the group of volunteers the latter had been ordered to raise.⁶⁰

As Houston departed to overtake the Johnson-Grant Matamoras Expedition, the government was fast approaching anarchy. By January 14, 1835, when Houston reached Grant, the Texas government was in anarchy due to the attempt of Governor Smith and the Council to remove one another. More significantly for the military, the Council had unilaterally removed Sam Houston as Commander-in-Chief and replaced him with Fannin, the very person whom Houston had entrusted to raise volunteers.⁶¹ So, between the Council and the Governor, the army now found itself with four commanders:

⁵⁷ James, 220.

⁵⁸ Hardin, notes that Grant had significant holdings in Coahuila before Santa Anna dissolved the state. Hardin speculates that Grant's Matamoras fever was in reality an effort on his part to regain his holdings and not an attempt to gain any military strategic advantage. Hardin, *The Iliad*, 107.

⁵⁹ Hardin, *The Iliad*, 107.

⁶⁰ James, 220-221.

⁶¹ James, 222.

Houston, Fannin, Johnson and Grant, who had also assumed the title of “acting commander-in-chief.”⁶² The situation would be comical but for the fact that it ultimately cost the lives of approximately 600 men.

To say that the commander-in-chief of the Texas army, whoever might lay rightful claim to the title, was in a precarious position would be an understatement. Houston understood this situation. He took action as far as he thought his “authority” would permit him to do so. First, he dispatched Bowie, one of the few who remained loyal to him, to assess the situation at the Alamo with orders to Bowie were to destroy the place because it held no value. This order, though, was conditioned on gaining approval from the government, which by now was in upheaval. Unsurprisingly, authorization to carry out the destruction of the Alamo was never received.⁶³ Secondly, never a fan of the Matamoras Expedition but understanding his questionable claim to the title of commander-in-chief, he incited doubt in Grant’s troops by delivering a speech raising concerns regarding the prospects for success of their foray. This resulted in a slow exodus of troops from Grant’s expedition, leaving Fannin in charge of a disorganized force at Goliad.⁶⁴

However, the impact this confused state of affairs created by the government did not end with the army lacking a commander and a clear mission. The government’s decision that the militia would not be under the orders of the regular military now affected the men of the Alamo. This small garrison’s situation was most perilous due to

⁶² Hardin, 109.

⁶³ Sam Houston wrote to Governor Smith after dispatching Bowie to Bexar that, “I have ordered the fortifications in the town of Bexar to be demolished, and, if you should think well of it, I will remove all the cannon and other munitions of war to Gonzales, blow up the Alamo and abandon the place, as it will be impossible to keep up the Station with volunteers, the sooner I can be authorized the better it will be for the

the requisitioning of men and supplies by the Johnson-Grant Matamoras Expedition, the arrival of an unusually harsh winter, and impending appearance of 6,000 Mexicans. Despite these facts, the Alamo defenders saw fit to *divide* the command along volunteer-regular lines, a division implicitly authorized by the government.

By mid January 1836, Bowie, a volunteer, had arrived with his orders from Sam Houston to assess and possibly destroy the outpost. Two days after Bowie arrived, William B. Travis, holding a regular commission, arrived with newly enlisted regular troops.⁶⁵ On February 11, 1836, less than two weeks before the appearance of the first Mexican troops, Neill was called away because of illness in his family. Neill awarded Travis command because he held a regular commission, but the volunteers refused to follow him. After all, by law they were not required to do so; Texas volunteers *elected* their officers, so they elected Bowie. Eventually, Bowie and Travis agreed that both would sign all orders.⁶⁶ However, this exemplifies the depth of division between volunteers and regulars within the army of Texas, a division sanctioned by the politicians.

By the time that Santa Anna crossed the Rio Grand in January 1836, the situation in Texas was chaotic. After the government fell into anarchy, was the policy still one of loyalty to the 1824 Constitution or had it changed? Was the focus of the military effort to be an offensive action into Mexico or the defense of the Alamo? How was the Matamoras expedition contributing to the stated policy of maintaining loyalty to the 1824 Constitution? How would defending the Alamo achieve any objective? Was the Alamo

country.” Sam Houston to Henry Smith, January 17, 1836, John H. Jenkins, *Papers of the Texas Revolution, 1835-1836*, (Austin Tex: Presidial Press, 1973), 4:46, quoted in Hardin, *The Alamo*, 28-29.

⁶⁴ Hardin, 110-111.

⁶⁵ There are several references to “regulars”, especially in the defense of the Alamo. However, the author was not able to determine exactly how or the number of regular forces raised by the Texas Government.

⁶⁶ Hardin, *The Iliad*, 109-115.

to be destroyed? What was the force now stalled at Goliad to do? Who was in command of the Texas army? When regulars and militia worked together, who was in charge? As the war continued, many of these questions were answered; unfortunately, the answers came so slow that the effects of leaving them unresolved for too long could not be surmounted by the men at the Alamo and Goliad.

In the context of comparing the two opposing forces, a solution cannot be found to the issue of how the Texans managed to succeed in a situation where the war seemed to be driving policy and the policy was as unclear as the battlefield from which it sprang. Luck had not provided the Texans with a superior force to its enemy. The shortcomings of the Texas military, most of which were caused by the misguided steps of the government, sliced through all levels of warfare from the strategic to the tactical. To be sure, the Mexicans endured their own inadequacies. Their leadership was ruthless, the men were exhausted, and their supplies limited. However, they enjoyed superiority in numbers and were in fact an *army*. More importantly *because* their leader was ruthless and unequivocally in charge, the Mexican army enjoyed a strategic and operational focus that the Texans would not have until later in the war. No, the Texan's luck was not found in the fact that a superior force lead by sheep faced an inferior force lead by a lion.

CHAPTER 3

What Changed? Remember the Alamo....

*“Commandancy of the Alamo--
Bejar, F’by 24th 1836—*

To the People of Texas & All Americans in the World, Fellow citizens & compatriots. I am besieged, by a thousand or more of the Mexicans under Santa Anna. I have sustained a continual Bombardment & cannonade for 24 hours and have not lost a man The enemy has demanded a surrender at discretion, otherwise, the garrison are [sic] to be put to the sword, if the fort is taken I have answered the demand with a cannon shot, and our flag still waves proudly from the walls. I shall never surrender or retreat. Then, I call on you in the name of Liberty, of patriotism and everything dear to the American character, to come to our aid, with all dispatch. The enemy is receiving reinforcements daily and will no doubt increase to three or four thousand in four or five days. If this call is neglected, I am determined to sustain myself as long as possible and die like a soldier who never forgets what is due to his own honor and that of his country VICTORY OR DEATH. ”⁶⁷

William Barret Travis

So, how did Texas manage to win a war that was fast becoming a hopeless situation by the winter of 1835-36? Circumstances began to change. For one, the gravity of the situation that the people and the army faced due to the incompetent leadership of the government began to move to the forefront of public concern. Travis’ public pleas for assistance communicated the reality that Texas had been “invaded” and the situation was growing desperate.⁶⁸ Unfortunately, it was impossible to mount a response to the urgent needs of the moment with the Texas government in anarchy.

The ability to provide guidance in the face of the growing crisis did not materialize until a new delegation was chosen by general election to establish yet another government. This new entity reflected the recognition of the voting public that Texas was in urgent need of firm political leadership. On March 2, 1836, those elected officials, among them Sam Houston, signed the Texas Declaration of Independence.⁶⁹ The apparition of loyalty to Mexico through the recognition of the nonexistent

⁶⁷ William Barret Travis’ letter from the Alamo, on line ed, URL:

<http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/treasures/republic/alamo/travis-full-text.html>, accessed 26 September 2001

⁶⁸ Lack, 82.

Constitution of 1824 was gone. This shift in policy provided the needed direction so noticeably missing during the initial critical stages of the war, but the Texans were now in a war of survival for their new republic.

The second major change occurred in the military. First, on March 4, 1836, the Convention appointed Sam Houston once again as to the position of commander-in-chief. This effectively dissolved all other claims to the title. However, even more significant than the dissolution of Johnson, Grant, or Fannin's possible claim to the office, the Convention gave Houston authority over both the militia and regular army. This measure was passed at Houston's insistence.⁷⁰

From the moment the Convention met, it began to unravel the tangled confusion caused by the Consultation. The war was now an instrument of policy, and the military was united in the struggle to achieve a single stated policy goal under the leadership of a single man within a single chain of command.⁷¹ However, the war still had to be fought, and it would soon be discovered after this first meeting that changes made to correct the errors of the Consultation came too late to thwart the tragedies that would occur at the Alamo and Goliad.

Houston's first order from the interim government was to relieve the Alamo garrison. On the morning of his departure, March 6, 1836, from Washington-on-the-

⁶⁹ Hardin, *The Iliad*, 162.

⁷⁰ Hardin, *The Iliad*, 162.

⁷¹ "Unity of command" is not an explicit element of conducting a successful campaign under Marine Corps doctrine. However, its importance is implied in the significance placed upon the reduction of uncertainty, facilitation of decision-making and generation of a high operational tempo through effective command and control. If command is divided, through mistake and even sometimes by design, the ability to achieve the necessary synergy of the remainder of the warfighting functions – intelligence, logistics, fires, force protection, maneuver – becomes difficult if not impossible to achieve as in the case of the Texans. For a

Brazos (now a state park approximately 60 miles northwest of Houston and 150 miles northeast of San Antonio⁷²), Houston still had two viable forces in the field: Fannin's force of approximately 400 men who remained from the Matamoras expedition, and Travis and Bowie's force of an estimated 180-200 at the Alamo.⁷³ During the time that the Texas government fell into disarray and the leadership of the military was splintered, these two small independently operating forces were all that obstructed Santa Anna's line of advance. On February 23, Bowie and Travis had communicated with Fannin requesting that he reinforce the Alamo. Lacking clear policy direction from the government and a unified command establishing the focus of effort for the military, Fannin remained at Goliad, 90 miles away from Travis and Bowie who were determined to defend the Alamo.⁷⁴ Because of the distance that separated the two outpost, the positions were not mutually supporting.⁷⁵

Prior to departing Washington-on-the-Brazos, Houston ordered Fannin to move to Victoria. From reading a map, the purpose of this order is unclear. However, in a letter to friend, Houston provided a clue to his intent. He states, "We are now compelled to take a post on the east side of Guadeloupe [sic] (river), (a river which runs to the West of Gonzales)We cannot fight the enemy ten to one, in their own country."⁷⁶ It seems to have been Houston's plan to consolidate forces on the east side of the Guadalupe River.

discussion regarding command and control, see U.S. Marine Corps Publication, MCDP 1-2, *Campaigning*, (August 1997), 76-78 and MCDP 6, *Command and Control* (October 1996).

⁷² Rand McNally, *Portrait World Atlas*, 2001 ed.

⁷³ Grant had managed to persuade some men to continue on to Matamoras. On March 2, 1836, General Urrea, who was moving along the eastern coast of Texas, routed Grant's small contingent at Agua Dulce Creek. Hardin, *The Alamo*, 52-53.

⁷⁴ History has not been kind to Fannin nor should it be. In the confused state of affairs of the Texas government, Fannin held at least as much authority as Houston to take necessary action. However, even he admitted to his incompetence to hold command. Lacking clear guidance, Fannin had not decided that his position at Goliad was so important that it could not be abandoned; rather, he lacked the force of will to move his army to relieve the Alamo garrison. Hardin, *The Alamo*, 58.

(See Figure 32a). From that position, he might have been able to engage or distract Santa Anna's forces away from the Alamo into terrain of Houston's liking. However, the government's order to Houston to relieve the Alamo and his subsequent order to Fannin to assist came too late. Unbeknownst to Houston and the government, the Alamo had fallen on March 6, the very same day he had departed Washington-on-the-Brazos.

Houston learned of the Alamo's fate from Mrs. Suzanne Dickinson when he arrived in Gonzales on March 11.⁷⁷ She was one of three survivors of the battle. The other two were Mrs. Dickinson's daughter and William Travis' slave. Santa Anna's had allowed these people to live in order that they might tell the story of the fate of the Alamo defenders, thereby possibly creating panic in the heart of the Texans.⁷⁸ However, Santa Anna's tactical victory at the Alamo was Houston's strategic gain. The tale of the stance that Travis and Bowie's small force made against such adverse odds and their subsequent slaughter served as a rallying cry. Santa Anna's lack of mercy for the defenders resulted in approximately 300-500 volunteers awaiting Houston arrival in Gonzales despite many of their families leaving Texas. Santa Anna's bloody tactics had backfired.⁷⁹

Houston's first move as commander-in-chief would not be to rush to the aid of dead men with an untrained army. Instead, he ordered his army to withdraw to the

⁷⁵Hardin, *The Iliad*, 134-135.

⁷⁶ Houston to Henry Raguet, March 13, 1836, quoted in James, 229.

⁷⁷ Historians have made much of the fact that it took Houston five days to arrive in Gonzales. However, this is miss-guided criticism. Houston's order to Fannin would require a force of approximately 400 men with artillery pieces to withdraw a distance of twenty-five miles. Remembering that this was not a disciplined army, it would take time, maybe not five days but more then a few hours to move the disorganized troops and prepare for follow-on action. It would also be some time before Fannin even received the order. Houston may have lacked a sense of urgency, but given the rate of travel for the order and Fannin's force, if he had arrived in Gonzales any sooner there would not have been much to do but wait. See Hardin, *The Iliad*, 163 for further discussions regarding this debate.

⁷⁸ News of the fall of the Alamo and the advancing Mexican Army created a panic. There was a mass exodus of the settlers that were along the line of advance of Santa Anna's forces. This exodus became know as the "Runaway Scrape." For a detailed discussion of the Runaway Scrape see Hardin, *The Iliad*, 163.

Colorado River, about 50 miles east of Gonzales. Now, in accordance with Houston's March 6 order, Fannin should have marched to Victoria. If he had done so, Fannin would have been in position to protect Houston's left flank from Urrea's advance and to consolidate forces on order with Houston beyond the Colorado River.⁸⁰ (See figure 33a).

Fannin never executed this directive because from March 13 until March 21 he was actively engaged with Urrea's forces. As a testament to the ragged but still very capable and well-led Mexican army of General Urrea, most of the 400 men led by Fannin were captured outside of Goliad.⁸¹ After the battle, the numbers according to the Mexicans were 365 prisoners of war, 97 of who were wounded, and 27 dead. Urrea's totals were 11 dead and 49 wounded.⁸² What made this battle memorable is that on Santa Anna's orders, *all* of Fannin's men to include the wounded were executed.⁸³ This massacre served to further fuel the anger of the Texans, which they would ultimately unleash on the Mexican forces at San Jacinto.

Goliad, like the Alamo, was once again the result of the Texas government leaving the military without a unified command for most of January, all of February, and the first week of March 1836. The corrective actions of the convention came too late.

⁷⁹ James, 229

⁸⁰ Hardin, *The Iliad*, 164

⁸¹ For a detailed discussion of Fannin's forces and his ineptitude at Goliad, see Hardin, *The Iliad*, 163-174.

⁸² de la Pena, 75.

⁸³ de la Pena wrote regarding the execution of the prisoners at Goliad, "I am glad to say that there were but a few who gave approval to the carnage at Goliad and other similar instances. The army in general was stirred up and raised its voice to condemn it, for it wished to distinguish itself, to make its wrath and power known at the moment of combat, but to exercise clemency and moderation with the vanquished. It recognized that the nation it defended should make itself respected and obeyed because of illustrious worth, for its gestures of compassions and humanity and not for its cruelty and terror. The cry of horror of the Republic (Texas) and the indignation of the civilized world made us tremble and look upon each other with disdain." For further discussion regarding the execution of the Goliad prisoners, see de la Pena, 83-93.

Houston's second appointment left him insufficient time to understand and repair the ineffectual leadership of the Goliad forces.⁸⁴

There comes a point in war when all distractions fall away and the outcome is left to the commanders in the field. Houston was at this point by March 21, 1836. The price for the incompetent leadership of the Consultation had been paid at the Alamo and Goliad. By the spring of 1836, the government had stabilized and its policy objective for the war was clear, Texas independence. There was no need to rush to the aid of encircled men. There was now one commander, Sam Houston, with one army, the force at Goliad, and one mission, Texas independence. This was where the war truly began. So, it is here that the answer can be found as to how the Texans achieved success when failure seemed so certain.

⁸⁴ Fannin must share in the blame for the Goliad massacre. He failed to act during the window of time between Houston's order and Urrea's main body reaching him. It is safe to assume that Houston could not predict the problem since Fannin was the former Commander-in-Chief and should have been capable of taking the necessary steps to execute his orders. Even if Houston had seen the problem, he did not have the time to ride to Goliad and move the inexperienced Gonzales troops. He would have had to be in two places at once. Of note, even though Fannin was a poor commander, when his forces were surrounded and Urrea was tightening the noose, Fannin's bravery in the situation was above reproach.

CHAPTER 4

The War for Texas Independence

*He who knows when he can fight and when he cannot
will be victorious.*⁸⁵

Sun Tzu

*Pay heed to nourishing the troops; do not
unnecessarily fatigue them. Unite them in spirit;
conserve their strength.*⁸⁶

Sun Tzu

Before addressing the question of how the Texans gained their independence, a comparison between the type of war that *should* have been waged against Mexico in light of the stated political objective of independence and the type of war that *was* waged must be made. To determine the type of war that should have been waged, the implied strategic objectives necessary to achieve independence must be articulated. There were two objectives; the removal of Santa Anna from power, and the absorption of at least a portion of Mexico into the new republic. The necessity to absorb a portion of Mexico is obvious. It is impossible to have a free nation when there is physically no land to call a nation. The requirement to remove Santa Anna rests upon the fury that he had unleashed on the rebels at Zacatecas, the Alamo, and Goliad. He left no options for the Texans but his removal if they were to gain their independence.

On a spectrum of possible *limited* to *unlimited* political objectives, an end state that requires the strategic objectives of the removal of an enemy's leader and the absorption of at least a portion of his territory is somewhat in the middle of that spectrum.⁸⁷ Based on the stated doctrine that an unlimited political objective requires the application of an unlimited military strategy while either an unlimited or limited military

⁸⁵ Sun Tzu, 82.

⁸⁶ Sun Tzu, 134.

strategy may be applied to achieve a limited political objective, the Texans could have undertaken either military strategy against the Mexicans. So, theoretically the Texans could have waged either a war of *erosion* or a war of *annihilation* to achieve their desired end state.⁸⁸

Practically, though, could the Texans have fought a war of annihilation? Clearly, the answer is no. A war of annihilation focuses upon the operational forces of the enemy and seeks their defeat. Santa Anna's operational forces and the resources available to sustain that force were much greater than those available to Texas. If the numbers are valid, even after the trek through the desert, and the engagements at the Alamo and Goliad, Santa Anna still had approximately 4,500 men under his charge.⁸⁹ Houston's army at its peak never reached more than 1,400-1,500.⁹⁰ Texas, an isolated colony dependent upon the United States and Mexico for its very existence, did not have the strength to fight a war of annihilation against such a strong foe and neighbor. The small Texas army would probably have been the first to be annihilated in such a war.

So, if a war of annihilation could not have been won, could Texas have won a war of erosion? At first glance, it would seem that such a war was best suited for the Texans because by definition a war of erosion can be conducted in a manner that does not require the defeat of the enemy's operational forces. However, in order to achieve the strategic objectives of removing Santa Anna from power and absorption of a portion of Mexico, Santa Anna's *center of gravity* would have to be eroded in order to have the desired impact. His center of gravity was not the will of the people; the President's center of

⁸⁷ See chart on page 56 of this text.

⁸⁸ *Strategy*, 42-57. See also Appendix B of this text for definition of *annihilation* and *erosion*.

⁸⁹ This is a rough estimation by the author based on the numbers provided by de la Pena.

⁹⁰ Hardin, *The Alamo*, 69.

gravity was his army. This was the primary tool he used to maintain his position and crush dissent within his government *and* his people. Therefore the Texans would have to degrade the power of the Mexican army to the point that Santa Anna could no longer hold his position as the political leader of Mexico, and whomever would succeed him likewise would not have the capability to bring Texas back into the fold. In theory, an erosion strategy may have worked, but for the same reasons that annihilation would fail so too would erosion. The Texans would have to defeat the army in both cases, and in both cases Mexico held the advantage in the resources necessary to sustain and win such a war.

More importantly, there was another obstacle that Sam Houston faced in choosing his military strategy, the Texas political leadership. The politicians made it known they were in no mood to watch the Texas army play “cat and mouse” with the Mexicans. This fact became clear when Houston was chastised by David G. Burnet, the interim president of Texas, for ordering the withdrawal of the army in the face of the enemy in the days following the fall of the Alamo and the massacre at Goliad. Burnet wrote to Houston saying, “The enemy are [sic] laughing at you to scorn. You must retreat no further. The country expects you to fight. The salvation of the country depends on your doing so.”⁹¹

Burnet was correct in his underlying premise; the enemy must be faced and defeated in order to achieve the stated political objective of independence. However, he was blind to the military situation of Houston’s small army. They could not fight a war of annihilation or erosion because both courses of action required that they defeat a superior enemy. So, the question again arises: how the Texans managed to achieve

⁹¹ Burnet to Houston, April 7, 1836, in Seymour V. Connor, *Battles of Texas* (Waco, Texas: Texian Press, 1967), 62. Quoted in Hardin, *The Iliad*, 189.

victory in a situation that would otherwise lead one to believe that strategic defeat was all but certain? Houston could stay and fight the enemy as directed, but lose his army, or disregard his commander's direction and keep the army alive longer in a war that they stood little chance of winning, but probably lose his command. The answer does not lie in the strategic realm; the answer lies at the tactical level of warfare.

Sam Houston knew better than Burnet the perilous situation and difficult task confronting his untrained and untested army. Though no one has ever uncovered the "lost war plans of San Jacinto", General Houston's actions speak to his knowledge that the Texans were not in a position to fight a major engagement with the Mexican army. On March 13, despite his doubts, he proceeded under the assumption that Fannin was withdrawing his forces from Goliad. Houston ordered Gonzales burned and then withdrew to the eastern bank of the Colorado River. By March 17, the Texas army, numbering only 374 men, reached Burnam's Ferry, almost 50 miles due east of Gonzales, where they would cross the Colorado. To the good fortune of the Texans, the spring rains began. This worked to their advantage because now there was a natural barrier between them and their numerically superior enemy. Also, from March 17-26, Houston's army grew to approximately 1400 men as news of the Alamo and the situation at Goliad spread. He took advantage of the natural barrier that the Colorado created to begin training his growing army.⁹²

The Mexican Army was on the move also. On March 11, Santa Anna's army broke camp at the Alamo. He ordered General Ramirez y Sesma to march to San Felipe de Austin (now San Felipe), approximately 150 miles away and take the settlement. Sesma had roughly 700 men. The direction of his advance would lead him directly

across the Colorado River from Houston. Sesma arrived in time to see Gonzales still in flames. However, he was unable to overtake Houston despite the latter's slow rate of advance caused by the wave of terror of Santa Anna's invasion. Once Sesma arrived at the Colorado, he was hesitant to cross the flooding river and overtake the Texans, which he could literally see across the way. Houston considered moving back across the river and attacking Sesma's numerically inferior force, but decided otherwise. He was still waiting on Fannin, and though his force outnumbered Sesma's it would have been Houston's men exposed to the dangers of crossing a flooding river under the eye of his enemy.⁹³

Sesma sent word to his commander informing him of the situation. Santa Anna decided to squeeze Houston in a vice. Sesma would advance to the enemy's front while Urea would move from the enemy's left flank.⁹⁴ Additionally, General Gaona, who had arrived in Bexar too late to participate in the Alamo, was ordered to march northeast to Nacogdoches (approximately 270 miles northeast of the Alamo) with a force of approximately 900 men. By April 1, Gaona was already in Bastrop, which was 40-50 miles north of Houston.⁹⁵ (See Figure 39a)

To Houston's good fortune, the floodwaters held back the Mexican advance on all sides. However, much to his disappointment, he learned of Fannin's surrender on March 23. Facing a three-prong advance, though he probably was unaware of Gaona's move to the north, Houston once again demonstrated that he was not ready to fight a major

⁹² Hardin, *The Iliad*, 100, 179-182.

⁹³ Hardin, *The Alamo*, 69.

⁹⁴ de la Pena, 65, 79-80.

⁹⁵ The position of the forces is quoted from de la Pena, 121. However, the plan is again perhaps giving Santa Anna the benefit of the doubt by the author. Santa Anna had sent Gaona north before he knew where Houston was, and Urrea's mission was always to advance up the coast line. If this were not Santa Anna's

engagement. On March 26, to the open disdain of his men, Houston traded space for time and ordered a second withdraw to San Felipe de Austin, approximately 30 miles to the east across the Brazos River. The army reached this area by the 28th, but from this point Houston decided to move his forces roughly 20 miles north to the site of Groce's Plantation. (See Figure 40a). The retreat to San Felipe had created such an uproar in the ranks that between 200 and 300 hundred men deserted; open dissention among Houston's men now existed. Spoiling for a fight, two company commanders refused to follow the army to the plantation. Their intentions made clear, Houston used them as a rear guard and left them to defend various crossings of the Brazos River. Ultimately by the time his army retired to the plantation, it had shrunk from 1100 to 500 in number.⁹⁶

As the floodwaters subsided, Santa Anna, now determined to catch the rebels, rejoined Sesma. On April 7, he reached San Felipe. To add to his fervor, Santa Anna captured a picket of one of the companies that had demanded to be left behind. He learned from the picket that Houston's army was only 20 miles north up the river at the plantation. So, he developed a plan to move upstream on the unsuspecting Texans.⁹⁷ Then an event occurred that would change the course of Santa Anna's campaign.

On April 12, still loitering south of Houston's position, civilians informed Santa Anna that the Texas Government had moved to Harrisburg, only 40-50 miles away. Santa Anna had been chasing the snake, but the head was now within reach. Leaving behind a small contingent, Santa Anna advanced to Harrisburg with approximately 700 men. Arriving in there on April 15, he learned that the Texas government had recently

plan, it is safe to assume that at a minimum he realized the advantage he held given the location of his forces and the position of the enemy.

⁹⁶ Hardin, 183 -186.

⁹⁷ Hardin, *The Iliad*, 187-188.

fled to New Washington (now Morgan's Point) 20 miles away. So, he sent a still smaller force in pursuit and also sent dispatches back to San Felipe to send another 500 men to his position. He then set off to New Washington behind his light force hoping to capture the retreating government. Santa Anna missed his objective by minutes, literally. His light force could see the government rowing away to Galveston Island. However, the Generalissimo had essentially cut off the head of the snake. He now stood between Houston and the Texas government.⁹⁸ (See Figure 41a).

Santa Anna's accomplishment was a relatively minor one when compared to the cost. The government and the rebel army still existed. However, Houston's force was now to the Mexican president's rear, and he had only 700 men. Another 500 were expected to arrive, but Houston's army stood interposed between them. Santa Anna, always seeking victory at any cost, paid little attention to his extended lines of communication and his own perilous position. He also continued to disregard the condition of his exhausted army. The price he would soon come.

While Santa Anna was moving east, Houston did likewise. On April 12, he broke camp having drilled his army in the techniques of battle for two weeks. The time had also allowed his men to provision themselves, and heal from various wounds and diseases.⁹⁹ From the point when Houston broke camp, controversy arose among his men and continues today among historians as to the direction of his campaign. Was Houston pursuing Santa Anna now to his front? Or, was he moving to the Texas-United States

⁹⁸ Hardin, *The Iliad*, 188-190.

⁹⁹ Dr. Nicholas Descomps Labadie Journals as published in Sons of Dewitt Colony web page. URL: <http://www.tamu.edu/ccbn/dewitt/sanjacintolabadie2.htm>. Accessed 8 October 2001. Cited hereafter as LaBadie.

border in order to draw U.S. forces occupying post along Louisiana into the conflict?¹⁰⁰

A review of the issue is necessary since Houston did not reveal his plan.¹⁰¹

By this time, Houston knew that he did not have the confidence of the Texas government. Secretary of War for the Republic Thomas Jefferson Rusk had hand delivered Burnet's less than flattering letter. Additionally, Burnet had sent the Secretary to Houston so that he could personally examine the state of the army and assume command should Rusk deem it necessary, but this he did not do.¹⁰² Once again Houston found himself teetering on the brink of losing control over his army.

It was at this time, April 16, 1836, that Houston and his army found themselves literally at a crossroads. The left fork of the crossroads would take the army to Nacogdoches, away from Santa Anna, while the right fork would take the army to Harrisburg toward the enemy. The army was tense and ready for a fight. As it neared the crossroads, the advance guard moved forward. Unsure of which road to take, they opted to go between the forks waiting for the main body to dictate their direction. As the main body approached, the lead elements asked the owner of the nearby land to point the direction to Harrisburg. When Houston moved closer to the front of the formation, the landowner stood on his gate shouted, "That right road will carry you to Harrisburg just as straight as a compass." The men shouted, "To the right boys!", and the army chose its way without orders from Houston.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Hardin, *The Iliad*, 189-192.

¹⁰¹ Houston's move east and then south into Morgan's Point was to the north of those forces that Santa Anna had left behind. This is why there was no contact between by the two armies until they reached Morgan's Point. Hardin, *The Alamo*, 66.

¹⁰² Hardin, *The Alamo*, 65.

¹⁰³ Labadie.

Did Houston intend to go to the right? Many of his men believed he did not. One of his commanders reported that his company had disbanded itself because the men believed Houston intended to go to Nacogdoches, to the left. Dr. Nicholas Labadie, who was traveling with the army, recounts that Houston dispatched a courier to a company of men that was scheduled to join the army. The courier was to inform them that the army had now *changed* directions and was going to Harrisburg.¹⁰⁴ The strongest evidence pointing to General Houston's intent to head to Nacogdoches is a story recounted by three writers. Upon hearing that the army was moving toward Harrisburg, one Mrs. Mann, demanded that the oxen she had loaned to the army be returned since she had loaned the animals to go only as far as the Trinity River. This would have meant that the army was moving northeast to Nacogdoches. Since the army had changed direction, "she would be damned if the General should have her oxen any longer."¹⁰⁵ Left seemed to be the preferred direction of Sam Houston, but the army was heading to the right to battle Santa Anna. However, in the end Houston's plans remains a mystery.¹⁰⁶ Whichever direction Houston desired to take, given his standing with the Texas government, and the discontent displayed by his men for any further avoidance of a fight, he kept his true intentions to himself.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Labadie.

¹⁰⁵ See Hardin, *The Iliad*, 193, James, 243 and Labadie.

¹⁰⁶ Hardin recounts another story which would lend credence to the theory that Houston intended to head to Nacogdoches. According to Hardin, Houston admitted that when news of the Alamo reached him, he planned to move as near to the United States border as possible. The problem with this evidence is that the speech was delivered in 1845, nine years after reaching the crossroads. Prior to that time, there is no evidence other than what actually happened at the crossroads that supports any plan that called for an advance in either direction. Hardin, *The Alamo*, 73. The argument that Houston would have preferred to go left centers around the possibility of drawing U.S. forces stationed along the U.S.- Mexican border into the fight on the side of the Texans; see Hardin, *The Iliad*, 192. The counter to this possibility is that the U.S. unequivocally stated that it would not enter into the war; see Williams, 213-217 for further discussion on this perspective.

¹⁰⁷ Though technically under Houston's command at this point, history is replete with examples of the men taking issue with Houston's orders and outright insubordination. The example of the company

On April 18, a Mexican courier was captured which revealed Santa Anna's position at Morgan's Point. By this time, the Texas army was in Harrisburg.¹⁰⁸ Again, the next step in Houston's plan is surrounded in controversy. Before moving, he made a speech to his men promising them battle and telling them to "Remember the Alamo!" He then ordered the army to march to Lynch's Ferry, about nine miles north of Morgan's Point. By 20 April, Houston's Army had taken up positions on the north-northeast end of the odd shaped neck of land where Lynch's Ferry was located.¹⁰⁹ (See Figure 44a)

Santa Anna had also calculated that Lynch's Ferry would be Houston's destination after he received word on April 18th that Houston was on the move to the east. Santa Anna foresaw that the ferry could provide an escape for the Texans. By the time Santa Anna had arrived on the 20th, Houston already possessed the most advantageous ground. The Texans were hidden in the tree line to the Mexican front and there was a slight rise between the forces. So, Santa Anna, the president of Mexico with only 700 men at his disposal, had no way of knowing what danger awaited across the field.¹¹⁰

What occurred next is difficult to explain. Despite holding the advantage in numbers and terrain, Houston did nothing. He did not attack, did not consult his commanders, nor did he issue any orders. Because of his inaction, a bridge at a branch of Buffalo Bayou was left in tack, and this permitted General Cos to reinforce Santa Anna from the east. On the morning of April 21, reveille sounded at 0400 for the Texans, but the Commander-in-Chief slept. When he awoke, seeing that his numerical superiority had vanished, Houston ordered that the Buffalo Bayou bridge be destroyed, but that was

commanders refusing to go to Groce's Plantation is but one. See Hardin, *The Iliad*, 202-205 for another example of the level of insubordination of the Texas army.

¹⁰⁸ Hardin, *The Iliad*, 199.

¹⁰⁹ James, 244

all.¹¹¹ He still showed no signs of moving into the attack. Noon approached. The men worked themselves into a frenzied concerned. Finally, the Texas officers, dismayed at Houston's inaction, demanded a war counsel. This meeting lasted for two hours and produced two different versions of what occurred. The pro-Houston camp said that Houston was prepared to attack, while the anti-Houston camp claimed that the General wanted to withdraw back across Buffalo Bayou.¹¹²

It is difficult to imagine that even as incompetent as some of Houston's staunch detractors attribute him to be, he would have withdrawn at this point. Houston had moved his army to a position in close proximity of the enemy. Santa Anna was now only a few hundred yards away. It is difficult to imagine him considering a withdrawal of almost a thousand men across a bayou that he had recently crossed in order to move closer to the enemy. This move would probably have led to the destruction of the Texas army as it moved from the safety of the tree line into the open in order to cross the waterway. A risk of this nature would have been contrary to the overly cautious behavior Houston had previously displayed up to that point.

A more likely and logical explanation for Houston's inaction is that he was weighing the advantages and disadvantages of *attacking* versus *defending* from his current position. If he chose to defend, the Mexicans would have to cross open ground and advance to the tree line where the Texans were well hidden. Santa Anna had proven to be aggressive in nature. He had marched from central Mexico to the northeastern coast of Texas in pursuit of his enemy, some 490 miles. His aggressive tendency had played

¹¹⁰ Hardin, *The Iliad*, 191, 202-205

¹¹¹ Hardin, *The Iliad*, 206

¹¹² Hardin, *The Alamo*, 81.

out on the battlefield of Texas for the entire world to see. Withdrawal was unrealistic, but defend was an attractive possibility.

Finally, at 1600, on April 21, 1836, Houston ordered the attack. The Mexicans were tired and hungry from continuously chasing the Texans for the last three and a half months and almost 500 miles. A large portion of the Mexican army was to the north with Gaona. Urrea was still to the south. The forces on hand numbered only approximately 1,200 men. Their backs were to the water, and they did not know what was to their front. Santa Anna finally saw to the needs of his men, but at the most inappropriate time. He allowed his army to rest in the face of the enemy!¹¹³ The Mexicans were literally caught asleep by Houston's late afternoon attack. A year of vengeance was reaped upon Santa Anna's army. To cries of "Remember the Alamo!" and "Remember Goliad!", the killing did not stop until approximately 650 Mexicans lay dead and another 700 were prisoners. The Texans lost nine killed and 30 wounded.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Hardin, *The Alamo*, 81.

¹¹⁴ Hardin, *The Alamo*, 82-83.

CHAPTER 5

How Did The Texans Win Their Independence?

If the enemy is to be coerced you must put him in a situation that is even more unpleasant than the sacrifice you call on him to make. The hardship must not be merely transient – at least not in appearance. Otherwise the enemy would not give in but would wait for things to improve.¹¹⁵

Carl Von Clausewitz

Had Texas achieved independence by defeating Santa Anna's small force at San Jacinto? No. Certainly, San Jacinto was a tactical success, but other factor prevented this engagement from being the strategic success necessary to achieve autonomy. There were still approximately 2,000 enemy in the field ably commanded by Generals Urrea and Gaona. Urrea's, still to the south, had demonstrated the danger he represented at Goliad. With Gaona to the north, Houston was now in jeopardy of being surrounded by these two forces. Furthermore, there loomed the larger threat that Santa Anna represented. Though he experienced a loss at San Jacinto, this probably would serve only to galvanize his determination to rout the rebellion. He would simply reconstitute his force and attack again. Though the Texans had defeated a sizable force, they would have to have a tremendous amount of luck to catch the remainder of the Mexican army or a newly composed Mexican army asleep.

Along with the questionable contribution that San Jacinto made to Texas independence, it also resurrected some old and difficult questions. Who was going to be the commander-in-chief for future campaigns needed to defeat the remainder of the Mexicans? Houston's ankle was shattered by a canister shot during the fight, which made it difficult for him to continue in his duties. More importantly, in light of Burnet's letter and Rusk lurking over his shoulder, he obviously did not enjoy the full confidence

of the government. Furthermore, how was the government going to provide direction? It was now literally rowing for its life and operating from an island off the coast. How could this government provide the resources and direction needed for the continuation of the war? The Runaway Scrape had sent many of the settlers scurrying back across the U.S. border.¹¹⁶ Bexar, Gonzales, and Harrisburg were ravaged by the war. The possibility of actually achieving strategic success with the small 900 man army must have seemed as far away as it did in the days prior to the Alamo when there was no government, no military leader and essentially a nonexistent army. In light of the dangers that loomed, this is where the third element of the Clausewitz trinity, *chance*, affected the outcome of the war.

Still holding the battlefield the day after San Jacinto, the Texans brought to Houston a prisoner who was dressed in a common soldier's uniform. This soldier's true identity was exposed by the reaction of the other Mexican prisoners who recognized him to be their commander and president of their nation, Santa Anna. Though the initial impulse by the Texans was to execute him, Houston recognized the strategic advantage that he now possessed. Houston spared his life, but in return Santa Anna was forced to order the withdrawal of the remainder of his forces from Texas. This was accomplished by June 1836 when the last of the Mexican army crossed the Rio Grande.¹¹⁷

To the good fortune of the Texans, the capture of Santa Anna the day after San Jacinto was in essence the capture of Mexico. It was not that Houston *fought* a war of annihilation, but as chance would have it, Houston *won* a war of annihilation. Santa

¹¹⁵ Clausewitz, 77.

¹¹⁶ See note 76.

¹¹⁷ There has been some discussion regarding the fact that Santa Anna's commanders followed his order to withdraw. They were, after all issued under duress. See Hardin, *The Alamo*, 83-84.

Anna had made it possible. The president's contribution was not in the fact that he had unmercifully driven his army and then mercifully allowed them to rest at the most inopportune time. Nor was it the fact that he had divided his army into three smaller elements potentially leaving them subject to defeat in piecemeal. These facts did contribute to the *tactical* success of the Texans, but had not led to *strategic* victory.

Rather, the strategic success necessary to achieve independence was a result of the military *and* political leader of Mexico choosing to personally lead a campaign across Texas in order to take part in a fight against ordinary settlers turned rebels so that he could once again achieve the glory that had made him a popular hero. In so doing, he had become a critical vulnerability in the armor of his center of gravity. As a ruler, he was the linchpin in the structure that governed Mexico. Once captured, it was no longer an issue of simply replacing a general. The consequences of his capture or death would cause a disproportionate effect because of the position that he occupied in the political structure he had created. It was good luck for Houston and the Texans to find him shivering in the swamp the day after San Jacinto. Through capturing the critical vulnerability of the Mexican army, Houston rendered it ineffective as a fighting force because it was now subject to his will. Houston had annihilated it. If Santa Anna had not been captured, the victory would have accomplished little more than eliminating one-third of a Mexican army rapidly closing in on the Texans.

Ultimately, once all the angles of this war are examined, what remains is nothing more than *luck*. Many chapters have been written on the bravery of Travis and his men at the Alamo. Many more have been written on the slaughter of the men at Goliad and Fannin's poor leadership. Most scholarly studies take up the issue of Houston's

leadership in the war. Was it good, was it bad, which way was he going at the crossroads, etc...? What is missed when addressing these issues is that even if Houston was bad, Travis brave, and Fannin incompetent, they had achieved nothing and could be expected to achieve little else. The strategic goal of independence was far from being reached after the dust cleared at each of their respective engagements. No military geniuses or great army is responsible for the Texas victory. The Texans owe their independence to two items; a ruler driven by desire for more glory and ruthless suppression of opposition, and luck.

This war should not have been won when analyzed in light of modern Marine Corps doctrine. Initially, it violated the most basic of principles of that doctrine: war is an instrument of policy. There was at first no policy. Then there was a confused policy. The leadership in the military was fractured as a result of the confusion at the strategic level. Finally, there was no government. When these issues were put to rest, the war still should not have been won. First, they were resolved too late for half the Texas forces. Second, the Texans were not in a position to fight either a war of annihilation or erosion, both of which required the defeat of the Mexican army in order to achieve their stated policy goal of independence. This was a war that should have failed, however it did not fail because of *chance*. This critical concept can only be mentioned in doctrine but cannot be predicted or scripted into military plans. There is only one truth regarding chance and its play in war; given the chaotic nature of conflict, events will occur that could not have been known simply by looking at the cause. After all, who could have predicted that the strength of Mexico would become its greatest weakness? It was this

element, chance, that allowed the Texans to capitalize on the capture of a common Mexican soldier and pull success from failure out of the swamp at San Jacinto.

APPENDIX A CHRONOLOGY

1834

Antonio Lopez de Santa Ann abolishes the 1824 Constitution and dissolves state legislatures making states military departments.

1835

May: Santa Anna defeats the Zacatecas rebellion

October 22: Clash between Texans and Mexicans over the return of a cannon given to the Gonzales settlers by the Mexican government. The Texans defeat the Mexicans. This is regarded as the beginning of the war.

October 28: 92 Texans under command of James Bowie defeat approximately 400 Mexicans at the Battle of Concepcion.

October-November: Texans begin their siege of the Mexican garrison at Bexar under command of General Martin Perfecto de Cos.

November 3: The Consultation meets for the first time.

December 5-9: Texans storm Bexar and defeat Cos. He and his forces are the last remaining Mexican forces in Texas at the time.

1836

January 9: The Texas government falls into anarchy.

February 16: Santa Anna crosses the Rio Grande north of Monclova.

February 17: General Jose de Urrea moves across the Rio Grande from Matamoras.

February 23: Santa Anna arrives at the Alamo.

March 2: Urrea ambushes and defeats the remainder of the Johnson-Grant lead Matamoras expedition. Texas declares its independence.

March 6: Houston leaves Washington-on-the-Brazos with the mission of relieving the Alamo garrison; on this same day, the garrison falls.

March 11: Houston arrives in Gonzales.

March 12: Houston learns of the Alamo's fate.

March 17-19: Houston's army cross the Colorado River.

March 20: Colonel James Fannin surrenders to General Urrea.

March 23: Houston learns of the fate of Fannin's forces at Goliad.

March 26: Houston abandons the Colorado River and moves to San Felipe.

March 27: Goliad Massacre (over 340 Texans executed).

March 28-29: Houston arrives at San Felipe, but then moves his army up river to Groce's Plantation.

March 30-12 April: The Texas army drills and recovers at the plantation.

April 17: The Texas army arrives at the crossroads and takes the fork to the right going to Harrisburg.

April 21: The Texans route the Mexican army at San Jacinto.

April 22: The Texans capture Santa Anna dressed as a common soldier and negotiate the withdraw of the remaining Mexican forces.

26 April: The Mexican Army begin its withdraw through Texas.

15 June: The Mexican Army crosses the Rio Grande at Matamoras.

March 1837: United States recognizes Texas as a sovereign nation.

September 1839: France recognizes Texas as a sovereign nation.

November 1840: Great Britain recognizes Texas as a sovereign nation.

Despite trying to reclaim Texas by force on at least two more occasions after Santa Anna's surrender and failing, Mexico never recognized Texas as a sovereign nation. Finally, in 1845 Texas was admitted to the United States as the 29th state. The Mexican-American War ensues, 1846-48.

APPENDIX B

Terminology of Modern Warfighting Doctrine

All the following definitions were either paraphrased or quoted from Marine Corps Doctrine Publication, 1, *Warfighting*, 1-1, *Strategy*, or 1-2, *Campaigning*. Only where a direct quotation is given will a page number also be given in conjunction with the referenced publication. This appendix is made in order to facilitate the reader's understanding of the phrases that are normally not used or are misused in historical analysis of the Texas Revolution.

Annihilation: A military strategy that *must* be used when the political objective is unlimited, but *may* also be used if the political objective is limited. "The focus of operational efforts is the enemy's armed forces.... Victory is easily measured: when the enemy's fighting forces are no longer able to present organized resistance." (U.S. Marine Corps Publication MCDP 1-2, *Campaigning*, 38)

Battle: A series of tactical engagements that last longer than an engagement, involving larger forces, where the adversaries have committed to fight for a significant objective. Therefore, they usually have operational significance. The battle is the sum of the engagements. (U.S. Marine Corps Publication MCDP 1-2, *Campaigning*).

Center of Gravity: "A source of the enemy's strength." A strategic center of gravity is "an objective whose seizure, destruction, or neutralization will have a profound impact on the enemy leadership's will or ability to continue the struggle." Operationally, "it is normally an element of the enemy's armed forces." The operational and strategic centers of gravity may be one in the same. (U.S. Marine Corps Publication MCDP 1-2, *Campaigning*, 41-41)

Critical Vulnerabilities: Is the manner in which a center of gravity may be indirectly attacked. Vulnerability cannot be critical if it does not undermine a key center of gravity. A critical vulnerability is not a vulnerability if it is a key strength. (U.S. Marine Corps Publication MCDP 1-2, *Campaigning*)

Engagement: “A small tactical conflict, usually between opposing maneuver forces.” (U.S. Marine Corps Publication MCDP 1-2, *Campaigning*, 18)

Erosion: A military strategy that is appropriate when the political objective is limited. “The means by which a campaign of erosion convinces the enemy leadership to negotiate is the infliction of unacceptable cost.” The focus of effort may be against the enemy military or against something else that the enemy values. It may be, but is not limited to being economic, geographical or political in nature. Victory is not as clearly defined as in a war of annihilation. (U.S. Marine Corps Publication MCDP 1-2, *Campaigning*, 40)

Limited Political objectives: “A limited political objective includes anything short of eliminating the political opponent. It is envisioned that the enemy leadership will remain in control after the conclusions of hostilities, although some aspect of its power (influence, territory, resources, or internal control) will be reduced or curtailed.” (U.S. Marine Corps Publication MCDP 1-1, *Strategy*, 46)

Military strategy: The “art and science of employing the armed forces of a nation to secure the objectives of national policy by the application of force or threat of force. It involves the establishment of military strategic objectives, the allocation of resources, the imposition of conditions on the use of force, and the development of war plans.” (U.S. Marine Corps Publication MCDP 1-2, *Campaigning*, 5)

National strategy: The “art and science of developing and using the political, economic, and informational powers of a nation, together with its armed forces, during peace and war to secure national objectives.” Military strategy must be subordinate to national strategy and must be coordinated with the use of the nonmilitary instruments of national power. (U.S. Marine Corps Publication MCDP 1-2, *Campaigning*, 4)

Operational level of warfare : It is the link between the strategic and tactical levels of warfare. It is the use of tactical results to attain strategic objectives. The operational level includes deciding when, where, and under what conditions to engage the enemy in battle, and when, where and under what conditions to refuse battle in support of higher aims. (U.S. Marine Corps Publication MCDP 1, *Warfighting*)

Tactical level of war: The level of war at which battles and engagements are planned and executed to accomplish military objectives assigned to tactical units. The tactical level of war focuses on the application of combat power to defeat an enemy force in combat at a particular time and place. (U.S. Marine Corps Publication MCDP 1, *Warfighting* and U.S. Marine Corps Publication MCDP 1-2, *Campaigning*)

Unlimited Political Objectives: The focus is to remove the enemy’s political objective – deposed, exiled, imprisoned or executed – while the enemy’s former assets may be absorbed, redistributed or eradicated. Essentially the goal is to impose upon your enemy your social order. (U.S. Marine Corps Publication MCDP 1-1, *Strategy*)

APPENDIX C

Political Objectives and Military Strategy Charts

Below are two charts taken from Marine Corps Publication MCDP 1-1, *Strategy*. The first is from pages 44-45, and the second was taken from page 57. These will assist the reader in understanding the relationship between political objectives and military strategy, particularly as the concepts apply to the discussion in Chapter 3 of this text.

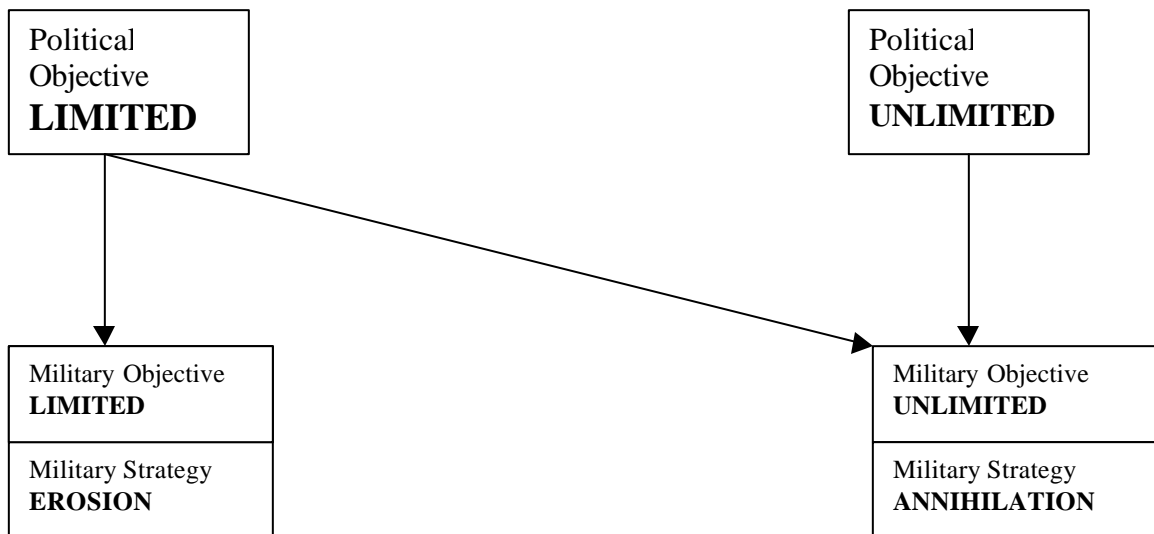
POLITICAL OBJECTIVE

LIMITED

UNLIMITED

OPPOSING LEADERSHIP

SURVIVES				REMOVED			
INTIMIDATE	CAUSE CHANGE OF POLICY	REDUCE ENEMY MILITARY CAPACITY	TAKE SLICE OF TERRITORY	CHANGE REGIME	CHANGE FORM OF GOV'T	CONQUER/ ABSORB	EXTERMINATE



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de la Pena, Jose Enrique. *With Santa Ana in Texas, A Personal Narrative of the Revolution*. Trans. by Carmen Perry. Expanded ed. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1975. No study of the Texas War for Independence would be complete without reading this work. Written by an obviously unhappy officer in Santa Anna's army, but his insight into the strategy and campaign of Santa Anna, as well as his blunt observations of its failures, provide key insight to the success of the Texas war.

Hardin, Stephen L. Professor of History, Victoria College, Victoria, Texas. E-mail interview by author, 4 September, 2001. Dr. Hardin provided extensive insight into the Texas Revolution based upon his expertise. He wrote his dissertation and two books on the subject, and is rightfully considered to be the leading expert on this subject.

Huffines, Alan C. *Blood of Noble Men: An Illustrated Chronology*. Austin, TX: Eakin, Press, 1998. This is the most recent collection of eyewitness accounts and quick facts, but it is not a critical historical analysis.

Jenkins, John H. *Papers of the Texas Revolution, 1835-1836*. Austin Tex: Presidial Press, 1973. All authors of the Texas Revolution rely upon this 10-volume collection of papers and letters. Because of its extensiveness, the only way to view this collection is to travel to a library that retains a copy. A complete set is retained by the Texas State Archives in Austin, Texas.

Labadie, Nicholas D. *Labadie Journals*. On line ed. as published in Sons of Dewitt Colony web page. URL: <http://www.tamu.edu/ccbn/dewitt/sanjacintolabadie2.htm>. Accessed 8 October 2001. This web site was accessed via the Texas A&M University web site URL: <http://www.tam.edu>. The Sons of Dewitt has published the journal of Nicholas Labadie on line. Labadie was a Texan who was with the Texas army during its retreat east and participated in the Battle of San Jacinto.

The National Weather Service. URL: <http://www.srh.noaa.gov/ewx>. Accessed on 22 September 2001. This provided critical information in regards to the unusual weather pattern that South Texas experienced during the winter of 1836. This was important in understanding the trials of the Mexican army as it moved from Mexico to Texas.

Sanchez-Navarro, Carlos. *La Guerra de Tejas: Memorias de un Soldado*, (Mexico: 1960), 85. Quoted in Stephen L. Hardin, *Texian Iliad*. Austin (TX: University of Texas Press, 1994), 155. This book could not be acquired within a reasonable timeline. Dr. Hardin quoted one statement from this volume and it was used in this paper. I cannot speak to the book's quality.

William Barret Travis' letter from the Alamo dated February 23, 1836. On line ed, URL: <http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/treasures/republic/alamo/travis-full-text.html>. Accessed 26 September 2001. This is an excellent site providing numerous articles, and even views of the original text such as the famous letter from Travis.

World Atlas New Millennium World Atlas Deluxe. CD-ROM. Skokie, IL: Rand McNally, 1998. This is a key work in understanding battlefields on a strategic level. The user can locate any place on the globe, access a short history of the region, see a terrain view of the region on a strategic scale, and measure distances.

Secondary Sources

Clausewitz, Carl von. *On War*. Trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret. Indexed ed. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976. Generally thought of as the "bible" of modern military science. His underlying concept that policy/politics is the driving force of war and his trinity – violence, chance, and war as an instrument of policy – are the basis for the modern doctrine of strategy and campaigning. This is a necessary read for any analysis beyond a tactical assessment of warfare.

Hardin, Stephen L. *The Alamo 1836; Santa Anna's Texas Campaign*. Great Britain. Osprey Publishing, 2001. This is an excellent book for quick facts regarding the Texas War for independence, and Hardin does provide some analysis. It is essentially a condensed version of his book *Texian Iliad*, but it is easier to read and provides a clearer time line to events surrounding the war.

Hardin, Stephen L. *Texian Iliad*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1994. This is the essential book for anyone who desires to understand the military component of the Texas Revolution. It provides detailed analysis of the tactical level of the war and some good strategic insight. Dr. Hardin is considered one, if not the leading, expert on the war. In my contacts with people and professors throughout the state, they would provide their opinions but would inevitably defer to Dr. Hardin's expertise on the matter.

Hardin, Stephen L. "The San Jacinto Campaign: The Generalship of Sam Houston". On line edition. URL: <http://alamo-de-parras.welkin.org/archives/feature/hardin.html>. Accessed 3 September 2001. There are numerous web sites dedicated to the history of Texas. Many contain articles written by well-known regional authors.

James, Marquis. *The Raven, A Biography of Sam Houston*. Indianapolis, ID: The Bobbs-Merrill Company 1929. This is somewhat a romanticized bibliography and should be read with a critical eye. It was not James' intent to critically examine Houston's life. He tends to gloss over controversial matters. However, he does provide facts and appropriate footnotes. Since he was writing to appeal to the general public and not a student of history, it does combine a good read with historical facts and is easily digested. A more recent biography was not used because Houston is not central to the question of how did the Texans won strategic victory.

Lack, Paul D. *The Texas Revolutionary Experience*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1992. An excellent book providing a critical analysis of the pitfalls encountered by the Texans as they attempted to fight a war for independence and take the initial steps to self-government. This book also provides demographic breakdowns of the army, the government, and the people of Texas. It was written for the serious student of the Texas political environment during its drive to independence. This was the key source for establishing the political conditions under which the war was fought.

McGee, Russell O. Major, USMC. *The Alamo Defense: The Forgotten Plan That Could Have Been*. MMS Thesis. Quantico VA: Marine Corps Command and Staff College (1999). This is an excellent critical analysis of the tactical defense of the Alamo that explores the possibility of conducting a viable defense of the mission. The opinions and conclusions expressed by Major McGee are his and do not necessarily represent the views of either the Marine Corps Command and Staff College or any other governmental agency.

Newell, Chester. *History of the Revolution in Texas, Particularly the War of 1835 & 1836*, reprint of the 1838 ed. New York, NY: Arno Press, 1973. A very interesting book in that it was written within two years of the subject matter. Newell was not a historian and historians have a tendency to downplay its value because he is seen as an amateur. However, the value of this book is the very fact for which they discount it. How did Texas look to the average person in 1838 and not to a 21st Century scholar? Newell provides this perspective.

Nofi, Albert A. *The Alamo and the Texas War for Independence, September 30 1835 – April 21, 1836*. Conshohocken, PA: 1992. This is a good book for quick facts, but not a rigorous historical analysis.

Roberts, Randy and James S. Olson. *A Line in the Sand*. New York, NY: The Free Press, 2001. Provides an excellent overview that looks at both the beginning of the war of Texas Independence and explores some of the legends that it created. This is not a critical study of the war that a purely scholarly work would be, but does lay out some of the key facts and issues in a manner that would appeal to a reader with a general interest.

Strange, Joe. *Capital “W” War: A Case for Strategic Principles of War*. Vol. 6 of *Perspectives on Warfighting*. Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University, 1998. Dr. Strange divides war into the strategic realm, capital “W” war, and the operational and tactical realm, small “w” war. He argues that there are certain “factors that should always be considered in each and every conflict (speaking in terms of capital “W” war).” These factors are the principles of War. The first principles is that you should know your enemy and yourself – a principle drawn from Sun Tzu. He continues with six other principles of War. This writing is for the modern military scientist who does not want to wade through the convoluted analysis of Clausewitz or the analogies of Sun Tzu. He brings those authors into the 21st century.

Sun Tzu. *The Art of War*. Trans. Samuel B. Griffith. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1963. Though its style is not friendly to the Anglo-European way of thought, it is a building block to understanding warfare albeit from a non-Western perspective

Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Trans. Rex Warner. Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1972. This edition of Thucydides history of the Peloponnesian Wars is particularly tedious in its style, but contains the full text of his account that has survived. It was not relevant to this study other than it set the tone for what I hoped would be an accurate accounting of the Texas Revolution.

U.S. Marine Corps. Fleet Marine Force Reference Publication 12-18. *Mao Tse-tung on Guerrilla Warfare*. Quantico, VA: April 1989. This provides a treatise of how to fight a revolutionary war with the technique of guerrilla warfare. Though it was not the direction of this study to compare and contrast what might be considered the doctrine of revolutionary wars and the use of guerrilla warfare with the nature of the Texas Revolution, it would have made for an interesting study.

U.S. Marine Corps. Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1-2. *Campaigning*. Washington, DC: November 1995. This book was used in the construct of this analysis. It provides the current Marine Corps doctrine for the operational art of warfare.

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Williams, Alfred, M. *Sam Houston and the War of Independence in Texas*. Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1893. This provides a perspective from interviews of eyewitness to many of the events surrounding the war. Additionally, Williams provides some critical analysis of the controversial events that surround Sam Houston, which includes an excellent discussion of the possible strategy of going to Nacogdoches. The difficulty is in the fact that though later historians confirmed many of the events that Williams discussed and he does provide a bibliography, he fails to footnote any of his text.